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**Social change, class formation and English:**  
**A study of young black South Africans with “Model C” school**  
**backgrounds**

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to the Linguistics Section, Department of English Language and Literature,  
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**Abstract: Social change, class formation and English: a study of young black South Africans with ‘Model C’ school backgrounds**

**Kirsten Morreira, University of Cape Town, February 2012**

This study is based on interviews and recorded word-lists from 44 young (under 25) black South Africans who have been educated in the former white school system, studying at the University of Cape Town. It considers their life experiences, particularly as regards their schooling. It also investigates their attitudes to language, both English and their ‘home languages’, as well as analysing their accents, and attempts to find correlations between accents and attitudes.

It first provides an overview of how this demographic is represented in the literature and the media, and then examines the history of black education in the country in order to explain why a ‘white school’ background and accent have become desirable now that they are attainable. Thus it shows how black education was for decades made deliberately inferior to white, so that the ‘opening’ of schools to all races in the early 1990s meant that those black parents who could afford it sent their children to the former white schools.

It then analyses interview material, finding that although there is variation in attitudes among the speakers, there are also many commonalities: their commitment to South Africa; their intentions to bring up any future children as bilingual in English and an African language, where possible; the ‘mixed’ nature of their friendship networks at school; their use of code-switching particularly with people of their own generation; and their sense of identification with an ‘ethnic’ identity based on their home language, even where they are not particularly proficient in the language.

It then goes on to examine their accents in formal word-list style and for the GOOSE variable, interview style, in order to discover what they see as the ‘best’ pronunciation of English vowels – i.e. what sort of accent they are aiming for. It finds that there are some correlations between the attitudes, upbringing and education of the speakers (age of exposure to White South African English; township versus suburban neighbourhood), which appear to relate to a continuum of accent types, particularly with respect to the GOOSE vowel. However, it concludes that although all the speakers have accents similar in many ways to WSAE, there is no unified ‘Model C’ accent, and that some speakers’ accents cannot be predicted by factors such as the above in any straightforward way.

## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted to the University of Cape Town for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination in any other university.

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Kirsten Morreira

19 November 2012

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## Abbreviations

AAVE	African American Vernacular English
ANC	African National Congress
B	Broad
BSAE	Black South African English
C	Cultivated
C2005	Curriculum 2005
CNE	Christian National Education
DET	Department of Education and Training
ERS	Educational Renewal Strategy
G	General
GNU	Government of National Unity
HL	Home language
JMB	Joint Matriculation Board
KZN	KwaZulu Natal
L1	First language
NECC	National Education Crisis Committee ('Crisis' later amended to 'Co-ordinating')
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NNSSF	New Norms and Standards for School Funding Act
NP	National Party
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
UCT	University of Cape Town
WL	Word list
WSAE	White South African English

## **1. Introduction**

(White) South African English (WSAE) in general has long been under-researched, although recently studies such as those of da Silva (2007), Bekker (2009), and Mesthrie (2008, 2010) have attempted to rectify this situation. The classical source is Lass (1995), whose description has recently been given support via Bekker's acoustic analysis of word list data; and this remains the most reliable description; but recent sociopolitical and socioeconomic changes in South Africa mean that the new situation requires investigation. This study falls under an attempt at such an investigation, led by Mesthrie, whose research is aimed at documenting the current situation of South African English across regions and racial and ethnic groupings. My particular study focuses on the English accents of those speakers who have been variously described as the new black middle class youth; the Black Diamonds; the Model C generation<sup>1</sup>; part of 'Generation Y' or more popularly but also often with an underlying hostility, Cheesegirls/Boys (see Oxlund, 2007) or 'coconuts'.

All these varying labels refer to the new generation of black South African youth who, as the children of (often newly) wealthy, middle class families, have been brought up in close proximity to white South African middle class society, along with its privileges and within its education system. As the 'model C' label implies, they are most easily recognised by their schooling: entry into the middle class is now signalled by the attendance of one's children at the privileged schools which under the Apartheid regime and before were reserved exclusively for 'white' students. My research subjects, therefore, were chosen by their self-identification as young 'black' people who had been educated in former model C or private schools; it is this demographic which is likely to emerge as the most powerful economic and social force within the country, and whose English accents, and linguistic attitudes, are therefore likely to become influential in South African society in general. Thus this is not strictly a study of WSAE; it is a study of the variety of English spoken by the black 'model Cs', but based on the assumption that their English accents are most likely to lie closer to WSAE than Black South African English (BSAE), as a result of their educational experiences (this argument is taken up in Chapter 4).

The privileges of this sector of South African society, of course, mean that they are not simply admired or emulated by broader black South African society; rather, as the existence

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<sup>1</sup> On the origin of this term see 1.2 below; for now, it suffices to say that it is concerned with a category of former 'white' schools within the South African education system, and as such I shall continue to use it as a label for this group.

of the derogatory term ‘coconut’<sup>2</sup> implies, they are often criticised, and seen as traitors to their own cultures as the result of their ‘white’ accents and behaviours. Nonetheless, despite this resentment and envy, it is they who are also sometimes seen as South Africa’s success stories: black youth who are highly educated, often highly intelligent and with high social and economic capital. It is because of this last, particularly, that the ‘Black Diamonds’ study was commissioned by private industry, as an investigation into the consumer habits of this demographic. As Mesthrie (2010: 6) explains:

This is a new status group, likely to form the backbone of a new Black middle class, and possibly a new South African middle class in which race is de-emphasised.

For these reasons, therefore, an investigation of this demographic’s accents and attitudes, and particularly their attitudes towards English and their ‘own’ African languages, seems pertinent at this point in South African history.

The structure of this thesis is very simple, and this introduction will attempt to outline this while also introducing in general terms the concepts necessary to an understanding of South African history and society, and the position of English within this new social order. The specific chapters beyond this introduction deal with, respectively, the historical reasons for the emergence of this new type of middle class, and its attitudes towards language and education (Chapter 2); the social and linguistic attitudes of my informants themselves, as expressed in interviews (Chapter 3); and a description of their accents, or more specifically, their accents in a formal Word List style and for one important variable, interview style, in order to establish what they feel is the most prestigious pronunciation of South African English today (Chapter 4). The concluding chapter will then bring these elements together, as an overall depiction of this sector of South African society, especially as represented by my own informants (Chapter 5).

### **1.1 A note on ‘racial’ terminology**

It is not possible to describe South African society without reference to racial and/or ethnic categories, but nor is it desirable to do so without an explanation. As is more thoroughly

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Black on the outside, white on the inside’ – see Chapter 3 for discussion.

explained in Chapter 2, South Africa until the early 1990s had the most rigidly ‘racially’ segregated political system yet seen, such that the four major ‘racial’ categories were kept as separate as possible from birth to death. Although Apartheid has been legally abolished, the societal results remain, such that in the main, South Africa, and South Africans, continue to view the world through this prism, so that the ‘racial’ categories of Black, White, Coloured and Indian are societally taken for granted. Thus it is necessary to continue to use them in order to describe the ways in which South Africans continue to categorise themselves and each other: as a social and psychological concept, race remains an organising principle of South African life. In interviews, my informants use this terminology unselfconsciously and without finger-quotes (with one exception; see Chapter 3), and I therefore see no need to impose either capitalisation or quotation marks on the transcribed data. Equally, it would be artificial to do so in the body of the text.

It is also necessary to explain the difference between Black and black: in the general literature, the first is used to refer to ‘black Africans’, while the second is usually reserved for the ‘non-white’ ‘races’. Here again, I prefer the usage of my informants, as evidence of general societal usage: I use black to refer to ‘black (i.e. African) South Africans’, as my informants do - for the sake of clarity. Where it is necessary to refer to the ‘non-white’ group(s), in the historical chapter, I generally call them ‘non-white’; the term may have arisen and been despised under apartheid but it was precisely the classifying feature, and it is less confusing than having to define a group by capitalisation. There is no evidence among my informants that they see lower-case black/‘non-white’ as a category in any case: the ‘four races’ remain separate.

Any work on South Africa has to deal with this issue, and I hope that I have made my usage, and my reasons for it, plain enough. ‘Race’ exists in South African society, and denying so would be not only futile but obfuscatory. All that can be done for research purposes is to record as faithfully as possible the ways in which it is used.

Having dealt with this issue, we can now turn to the depictions, in the public media and in the literature, of these black middle class/‘Model C’ youth. First, however, a brief description of what is meant by Model C schools is needed.

## **1.2 The meaning of ‘Model C’**

As is fully explained in Chapter 2, the ‘Model C’ classification came about as a result of options provided to the former white state schools during the transitional period of the early 1990s (Hofmeyr and Lee, 2004). The models were offered to the schools as much to manage the issues of falling white enrolment figures and financial pressures, as they were a result of increasing political pressure (Tikly and Mabogoane, 1997). The options of Models A and B were soon dropped, however, so that almost all former white schools opted for Model C (see below) – retaining state funding but with the right to levy fees in order to improve facilities or employ more teachers. Initially, they were also allowed up to 49% black enrolment, although this later dropped away when quotas were abandoned post-1994.

The label ‘model C’ therefore came to be used and accepted by the broader black community as a cover-all term for children who attended these schools, or even spoke or acted as though they did. Thus although the official name and classification has been discontinued, the term remains in the public domain as one expressing the students’ closeness to ‘whiteness’ and/or suburban, middle class values, as opposed to general township<sup>3</sup> youth.

### **1.2.1 Entry into the schools**

As is fully explained in Chapter 2, these schools, despite official government policies, have not made it easy for black parents to place their children in them: fees remain prohibitive, so that it is only wealthy parents who can access this system. Although the black middle class is growing (see Seekings and Nattrass, 2005), the majority of the Model C schools retain a largely white student body, so that black students are aware of being a minority<sup>4</sup>. However, this immersion into particularly traditionally ‘white cultured’ schools is bound to have an effect on their English accent, if not their overall behaviour/culture (see Chapter 3 for discussion). As is shown in Chapter 3, many behaviours in fact continue to separate white from black fellow-students, such as taste in music and sports; but nonetheless the immersion into school cultures does have an effect.

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<sup>3</sup> The differences between townships and suburbs, in my speakers’ experiences, are explored in Chapter 3; but as a general definition townships are those areas previously reserved only for black people; and continue as mostly (if not entirely) black neighbourhoods.

<sup>4</sup> Not that all of these strongly object to the fact, as is shown in Chapter 4.

Even in ex-model C schools where the majority of the students are now black, the staff remains almost entirely white, apart from African language teachers (where these remain; see Dlanga (2012) below). Thus white educational norms are maintained, influencing students perhaps into English accents that seem to have the most prestige – the first language WSAE spoken by the school authorities.

### **1.3 Introductory literature on the ‘Model C’ generation**

I turn now to descriptions of those similar to my type of informant, and their depiction of the world they grew up in. There are few studies whose data are directly comparable with mine, but nevertheless there are several which shed light, directly or indirectly, on what my speakers’ schooling and life experiences are likely to have been.

De Klerk (2000) investigates the likelihood of language shift to English among a group of black students attending ex-white schools; her research, however, focuses on the parents of these children in order to learn via them what their children’s language practices are, as well as their own reasons for choosing such schools, and their attitudes to language shift. In this study, conducted in the Eastern Cape, all families considered are Xhosa-speaking, although from the research it seems that language shift to English is imminent among the children. Among the information and attitudes reported by the parents are comments on how, since moving their child to a ‘white’ school, their use of English within the home has increased; either because the school told them to practise English with their children; or because the children themselves initiated the change. In the words of one parent, ‘At first we tried to speak Xhosa, but you can’t help it, the children know the English words, and their life at school it is English’ (de Klerk, 2000: 93).

However, the majority of the parents are thoroughly satisfied with their children’s progress, and have no regrets about their choice of school; nor are they particularly concerned about language loss. A few express anxiety about the potential loss of Xhosa from a cultural perspective; but feel that it needs to be maintained only for limited purposes such as home use and ‘cultural activities’ (de Klerk, 2000: 101). In all other domains, the parents actively promote their children’s exposure to and use of English.

De Klerk (2000: 101) therefore concludes that ‘among the children of these parents, shift to English is well under way, and is almost irrevocable’. She attributes this imminent shift to two categories of motivation: ‘economic and functional factors’, and ‘sociocultural’ factors.



In terms of the first, all the parents come from 'the better-educated and wealthier sections of society', from which vantage point they have seen the economic advantages that English, and presumably the 'white' English accents that they are so proud of in their children, can bring. The second set of factors relates to the educational context itself: in former white schools, the staff on the whole remain white, and thus educational 'success' is determined by the learners' mastery of 'white' norms, including the right type of English. Parents, too, seem to encourage this viewpoint, and therefore the children are brought up to believe in the power of, and necessity for, English, while Xhosa is relegated to lesser functions, and fewer and fewer of these as time goes by (2000: 105).

This argument is supported by the work of Makoe (2007), whose research in an urban primary school concluded that:

English [in this school] is discursively constructed as indispensable and the only medium of education; and children are thus socialised into the worldview that English is the natural order [...] using English in this particular setting is a means of claiming a higher status. That is, the ability to meet the necessary standard of English is equivalent to all kinds of favourable identity positions (2007: 68).

In a later publication, de Klerk goes further with her argument that it is black parents who are actively encouraging their children's shift to English; she states:

The parents in this study are actively and knowingly promoting shift from Xhosa to English in their children. For political, economic and educational reasons, they want their children to be assimilated into a single unified national culture which will probably be Western to the core (de Klerk, 2002: 11).

This gloomy picture of inevitable assimilation and language loss is, among my own informants, somewhat dispelled (see below) - it is possible that parents' (and teachers') attitudes may have less effect on their children's language choices than presumed; or it is simply a matter of different data samples. No comparable study exists, as far as I am aware. However, the work of Nongogo (2009) shows that the learners in her study, despite their immersion in an ex-white private boarding school environment, continue to use their African home languages as an 'identity-building resource' (2007: 43):

[T]he learners in this study were equally comfortable using African languages and English, alternating the use of each according to space and purpose of conversation, and to the particular identity position they wanted to assume (2007: 52)

Rudwick's 2004 research further refutes the notion that language shift to English is a general trend among black South Africans; however, her work is based on township-dwelling and township-educated youth, whose language practices very likely differ from those of young black people living in the suburbs or attending former white schools - which she acknowledges. However, the township-schooled informants' conceptions of 'white-school' educated black youth, even those who live in the township, are revealing: they see them as clearly distinct from themselves, as practitioners of 'white culture' (2004: 169) by their use of English. Rudwick thus concludes that 'the differentiation extends a simple 'black'/'white' dichotomy as township learners refer to learners in ex-Model C schools as 'others'' (2004: 169).

McKinney (2007) investigates attitudes to English use amongst black learners in ex-white schools. In this case, her informants seem similar to mine in that some resent the fact that their English competence is seen as an indication that they are 'losing' their home languages and black identities. The quotation McKinney uses in her title sums up this attitude - 'Just because I speak English does that make me less black anyway?'. Instead, learners see their proficiency in English - specifically, according to McKinney, in what they themselves identify as 'white English' (2007: 10), since this is the prestige variety - as an indication that they are 'well-educated'. This variety of English, therefore, is a symbol not of a racial but rather an educational, and hence class, identity. This association is not, however, without stigma: one of her informants explicitly links 'white people's English', as spoken by some of her 'rich spoiled' black friends, with 'snobbery and furthermore with a particular kind of elite consumerism'. On a different occasion, this same learner described this type of English as 'Louis Vuitton English', again explicitly linking wealthy consumerism with a type of accent, and thus equating both as class markers. McKinney makes this class-over-race symbolism clearer in explaining that '[this learner] is not merely linking posh English to white speakers but also to wealth and the ability to consume or at least the desire for elite consumption' (2007: 14).

In addition to the snobbish connotations of this variety of English, McKinney's informants, like my own (see 3.6 below), face another type of negative labelling, in that their schooling

and their speech (in terms both of frequent English use, and type of accent) lead to their being classified by other black people (or even each other) as ‘coconuts’. In essence the term refers to black people who supposedly ‘act white’; and speaking English, or not being able to speak an African language, is one of the primary diagnostics of a ‘coconut’. The issue is more fully discussed in section 3.7 below; however, it is important here to note that McKinney (2006: 18) sees the term as reflecting both the continuing essentialist view of race in South Africa - since it implies that ‘black’ and ‘white’ are homogenous categories; while some fall uncomfortably in between - as well as further problematising the ‘prestige’ of White South African English. Although to some this variety is now seen as a class rather than a race marker, its connotations are not always that simple, and its use by young black people draws criticism from many quarters.

In terms of identifying more general attitudes and types of learner in privileged ex-white schools, the work of Soudien (primarily 2004 and 2007) is invaluable. In his discussion of new types of ‘privileged’ learners, or what he calls ‘identities of advantage’, Soudien (2007) describes two types of black-in-white-school youth. In both cases, he describes these identities as ‘black and newly privileged’, but his distinction between the two centres on the extent of their new privilege, in terms of the extent of their removal from ‘typical’ impoverished black lifestyles. Thus, as he defines identities in terms of privilege rather than race, he acknowledges that ‘the approach I take [...] is to highlight privilege as opposed to whiteness as the marker signifying the dominant character of former white schools’. While privileged black learners are singled out as a group, he recognises that it is the extent of learners’ privilege, rather than their race, which now characterises the majority of learners at these schools. Although ‘race remains the dominant factor in determining social privilege in South Africa’, it is no longer the sole determinant of class; since ‘the middle class in the country has been reconstituted with the admixture of a new and significant black component’ (2007: 52)

Having recognised ‘black and newly privileged’ as a type, Soudien distinguishes between those black learners whose privilege extends to having grown up in the wealthy ‘white suburbs’, as well as being educated there, from those whose schooling is privileged but whose home background is not (the ‘Model C’ township youth who are seen as ‘other’ by Rudwick’s informants, above). This is further discussed below. In both cases, however, as in an earlier publication (see Soudien, 2004), he believes that ‘the approach of [the former white schools in his study] to the inclusion of children of colour is one of white middle class

assimilation, where children who are not white are encouraged to give up the values, cultures and languages of their home' (Soudien, 2007: 55). As Soudien points out, this trend towards assimilation of non-white learners is well-known 'in the literature and in educational circles' (2007: 55); however, he also acknowledges that 'assimilation is not a straightforward issue' (2007: 55). He therefore divides this assimilationist attitude into two types - aggressive and benign. The first, he explains, 'pivots on an old-fashioned kind of paternalism' (2007: 56), and is most common in small towns and rural settings; while benign assimilation, as found in 'former white English-speaking schools', mostly in cities, presents itself as multiculturalism, by attempting to recognise the cultural diversity of its students. Nonetheless, since this apparent multiculturalism 'leaves the dominant structures in the school untouched', it is still classified as assimilation (2007: 56).

To describe the two types of privileged black learners, Soudien (2007) draws on his own data, collected over many years, from interviews in mostly Cape Town schools, but also some in Johannesburg, Durban and the Eastern Cape. He contextualises the data by describing the recent - and rapid - rise of the black middle class, so that it now constitutes around 10% of the (black) African population; and its effect on former white schools as '[p]arents have made it clear that they will stop at nothing to give their children the best education available [...] the trend is for parents (whether they can afford it or not) to place their children in traditionally white schools'. In terms of the effect on the children of this new black middle class, he describes them as 'an entire generation of young black children - born frees - who have no knowledge whatsoever of the apartheid school experience' (2007: 77).

In Soudien's conception, then, the identities of these learners are shaped by their schools; he sees the schools operating on three levels in order for identity to be 'influenced for and developed by the learners' (2007: 57): the official, formal and informal dimensions of school life. The official and formal levels refer to the rules and policies of the schools, while the informal refers to learners' friendship networks within their schools.

In his division of privileged, black students into two categories, he separates those with 'more secure middle class backgrounds', whose parents are professionals and who live in white, coloured or Indian suburbs; from those from 'emerging working class homes making the transition into the middle class', and living in black townships. In both cases, they attend former white schools where they are 'prepared for the world of achievement'; however, the former also generally live in this 'white' environment, while the latter move between two

worlds. In language terms, Soudien sees the schools as 'powerful cultural machines', with language as the core of their functioning; the learners, then, are socialised into seeing English as 'unquestionably appropriate and correct' as 'a vehicle of inclusion into the ranks of the privileged' (2007: 77-78).

At the informal level, where the policy of the schools might be expected to have less influence, Soudien sees counter-cultures emerging, mostly in the ways learners choose to group themselves - very often by home language. Where the use of languages other than English is banned, some learners nonetheless 'made it clear to the teachers that they would not be bullied into an English-only identity'. Despite this, learners at such schools are still limited in their friendship networks to other members of the privileged ranks of society; when not using their home languages, therefore, their English usage is constrained by the schools' perception of appropriate language, including accent; and the fact that all those around them speak this form.

In terms of their identity positions within this world, even those whose home lives are lived in suburbia seem sometimes, to Soudien, to demonstrate ambivalence; or - less surprisingly - alienation from their supposed 'racial' identity. In some it seems to lead to 'a denial of their histories' and an inability to critically examine the world around them; while in others the ambivalence is experienced as positive, since 'many young people emerge from ambivalence with a heightened sense of awareness: they take little for granted' (2007: 83-84). These learners are able to become 'potent critics' of their experiences, since they are 'both insiders and outsiders of the multiple worlds they inhabit'. Thus Soudien sums this up by identifying the two possible results of being black and privileged: 'intensified self and social awareness', versus privilege 'dull[ing] the senses' (2007: 83-84).

Those 'privileged' learners who nonetheless live in black townships experience all this, but some of it to a greater degree, since their home and school lives are composed of such different surroundings and experiences. However, as Soudien comments, many 'take what the school offers and, in interesting ways, they normalise it' (2007: 85). Nevertheless, in contrast to the 'more privileged' black suburb-dwellers, they seem to be more concerned with 'fitting in' to the school environment than with succeeding academically; Soudien describes 'an attitude of insouciance' towards academic success, and to an academically successful 'identity' (2007: 86).

Soudien's overall conclusion draws heavily on the work of McKinney (2007; see above), where he quotes her comments on the fact that black learners in white schools seem to 'perform acts of identity [through language and code-switching] as an ongoing series of social and cultural performances rather than as an expression of a prior identity' (McKinney, 2006: 12; in Soudien, 2007: 88; addition Soudien's).

To what extent my own informants match, or contrast with, the conclusions of the above researchers, is described in Chapter 3.

#### **1.4 Media representations of the group**

Because the emergence of this group (or groups) of black privileged youth has caused some controversy in South African public life, media descriptions (not always accurate; see below) of it abound; however, there has been less attention paid to them from the academic world, and particularly linguistic descriptions. Da Silva (2007) is probably the best source of information on their linguistic practices, at least as they report them, while Mesthrie's ongoing project, of which this thesis forms a part, continues to investigate many types of SAE, including this sub-group. These, among other studies, are dealt with in Chapter 4; here I would like to introduce this demographic via its public face in the media.

A Google search for terms such as 'coconut' or 'cheese girl/boy' or 'Model C', and sometimes 'Generation Y', turns up multiple articles and blogs on, about, or by, the type of people this investigation seeks to study. I therefore discuss only some of these which seem to me particularly useful and interesting. The first of these is a 2008 article in the Mail and Guardian 'Thought Leader' blog, where Mpho Maboyi describes her frustration in trying to find a satisfactory social and linguistic identity: "having gone to what have come to be known as Model C schools, I have always felt as though I don't quite belong". She attributes this largely to linguistic issues:

Whenever I have been around people in the township, I can communicate in the lingo but at the same time I know I am not a kasi girl. So you ringa with amajita and all is good but even then you can ringa for so long then you are bound to say something that has you being labeled as a cheese girl. One will say a word that has you asking what that means and it's over. You are a cheese girl. That battle is lost. You don't belong ko kasi, that's just it. Stop trying.

However, the situation is no better outside black townships:

Being able to speak like a white person does not in any way make me any less black. Even in these 'being around white people' situations, I am still fully aware of the fact that no matter what, I do not belong with white people. At the end of the day, there's only so much that we can have in common.

These identity issues, inevitably, result in her feeling truly comfortable only around those like her:

The only people I ever really feel as though I belong with are other Model C blacks. I feel I am a black person who does not belong with other black people yet does not belong with white people either... now what does that make me? I'm not black enough to be black yet not white enough to be white... Life is just so complicated.

I have quoted extensively from this particular piece because it seems to me to sum up some of the core issues of sociolinguistic identity among the 'Model Cs'; to what extent this is true of more speakers can be seen in Chapter 3 by comparing this article to the interview data gathered.

Possibly just as interesting and useful as blogs such as these are the online comments made by readers: in this case, Maboyi is inevitably called a 'coconut', but then the commentator laughingly points out that she herself must also be one because she has white and Indian friends. More interesting, however, is a further comment, from a reader by whose grammar it is clear that he is not as comfortable with English as the Model Cs are:

If my understanding serves me, the Mpho is not a coconut because she does not believe by being from a Model C school is better than those who did not go.

This 'thinking you're better' is an extremely common accusation levelled at 'Model Cs', although in this case the author is spared the term 'coconut' because she does not appear to think she is 'better' than other people without her educational background; she is simply frustrated.

Expressions of frustration with the labels attached to them, and the reasons for which the labels are triggered, abound, in blogs as above, and in Facebook groups such as 'Just because I speak English doesn't make me less black' and 'just because i speak good english, doesn't mean i'm trynna be white'. The issues, therefore, are real and valid in the speakers' lives,

and are clearly often tied to language use. Indeed, the names of these groups echo the title of the article by McKinney (2007) mentioned above.

A more lighthearted but satirical piece from Ndumiso Ngcobo (2008) describes his black friends' disapproval of an email he sent out satirising the 'coconut' label: 'I confess I was taken aback by the passion exhibited by some of my compatriots when they feverishly defended their rights to characterise other citizens as 'coconuts''. He goes on to sarcastically suggest a 'Population Decoconuttisation Bill' to be submitted to Parliament; but nonetheless his descriptions of his friends' reactions are revealing:

Some of my friends even shone light into the dark corners of my mind by sharing a coconut grading system that declared 5fm's DJ Fresh to be in the "innocuous coconut" category. This category is for coconuts with only a despicable twang and nothing more.

This quote, amusing as it is intended to be, actually raises two central issues which occur at later points in this thesis, primarily in Chapters 3 and 4. The first is the recognition that there are shifting degrees of perceived 'coconuttiness', according to closeness to white and/or middle class culture, and according to who is doing the labelling (see Chapter 3). The other core issue raised is the question of 'the twang': it is one goal of this thesis to describe this accent (or range of accents) in order to understand what is meant by this precisely. The term is broadly used, it seems, to refer to any accent, in a black South African speaker of English, which diverges from that of Black South African English (BSAE): I have heard several definitions of 'the twang', which seem to encompass any white-influenced, and hence Model C, accents, but also including American influences. It seems that any such accents are classifiable as 'the twang' or 'having a twang', but like the 'coconut' label, it may depend on the listener's social positioning rather than the accent of the speaker.

The nature of the twang is therefore described in Chapter 4. For now, however, it is most useful to sum up the reasons for its existence.

### **1.5 The prestige of English in South Africa**

Despite South Africa's Constitutional commitment to language equality for the 11 official languages, English's position as both inter-ethnic lingua franca, and as a marker of the elite,



‘well-educated’ sector of society, has only increased in the past decade. Mother-tongue education, despite being a Constitutional right, is still in most cases resisted by black parents in favour of English (G de Klerk, 2002). The reasons for this stem from two main sources: South African apartheid history, which has led to mother-tongue tuition being viewed with deep suspicion; and the national as well as global rise in English’s (socio-economic) status, an awareness of which leads parents to the natural conclusion that access to English provides access to upward social mobility. While a discussion of the position of English in formerly black schools (still mostly, if not entirely, black in fact) is dealt with in Chapter 2, the societal perception of English and the concrete advantages it brings are relevant as an explanation for why, even without the higher quality of education available in former white schools, parents would choose to send their children there.

As discussed above, a ‘white-school’ background is prestigious: it opens doors to well-paying jobs and a middle-class lifestyle, and the accent acquired in these schools, however controversial it might at different times and in different places prove to be, ensures that the education the speaker has received is immediately clear. How the prestige of these schools came about stems from the deliberately unequal, racially segregated education systems in place under the apartheid government, as well as from the broader social engineering which was designed to lead the black population to believe that white knowledge, and hence white education, was superior to black.

The history of education in South Africa, as documented in Chapter 2, goes a long way to explaining why English is viewed as a desirable asset for much of the black population; and tied to this is the continuing socio-economic prestige that the acquisition of English (the more fluent the better, of course) can bring. Thus any explanation of the current status of English in South African society must take into account these two factors, as well as examine how they are intertwined. This is fully explored in Chapter 2, but an overview is useful here. Under the apartheid government, education, as with every other aspect of South African life, was strictly segregated along ‘racial’ lines. Students were not only sent to different schools on the basis of race, but the education of different races fell under entirely different education departments. Thus white education was governed by an entirely different department to those catering for other races. In all, there were no fewer than 17 education departments, and the resources made available to each were by no means equal. In addition to making sure that particular types of schools were poorly resourced, the Bantu Education Act of 1953 was designed to make sure that in the ‘black schools’, black education was deliberately inferior to

white, thus preventing black school-leavers from competing with white for skilled and well-paying jobs. Mother-tongue education was enforced for all 'races' for the first 4 years of primary school, after which education continued in English and Afrikaans (Brook, 1996). Since Bantu Education was recognized by the black population for what it was – a means of control via a deliberate policy of keeping black people away from knowledge and power – the use of African languages in schools became associated with oppression and the denial of access to education. Meanwhile, the status of English was increased further by the attitudes to Afrikaans that were prevalent, and which finally exploded in the July 1976 protest riots: Afrikaans, the language of the oppressive Apartheid government, was enforced in schools, and it was this that led to the uprising, and the subsequent abandonment of Afrikaans in black schools. English's status could only benefit from this: education in an African language was seen as inferior, and Afrikaans was oppressive, but English was the route to knowledge and power, both social and economic.

The ultimate result was the situation we see today: English education in (former) white schools is prized above all others. While the Afrikaans education system still carries some prestige among black families, as 'white' schooling, the most sought-after schools are the English-speaking former Model C schools, or in some cases, where affordable, the higher-status private schools.

### **1.6 Perceptions of language shift and 'loss'**

This effect of 'white schooling' has been noticed by the media; examples of headlines lamenting the apparent death of African languages and cultures abound, the blame for which is usually placed squarely on the schools and their emphasis on English. However, my own research and Mesthrie's 2008 publication, based partly on this research, suggests that at least among my speaker sample, attachment to African languages often remains strong against the odds, as shall be seen in Chapter 3. Thus a newspaper article ominously called 'Death of the Mother Tongue' (Nicol, 2004) is used by Mesthrie (2008) as an example in which he carefully analyses each claim, and finds that the situation is far more nuanced than such claims suggest. In addition, he discusses de Klerk's (2000) findings that among Xhosa-speaking parents who have chosen to send their children to former white, English-speaking schools, there was little support for the maintenance of Xhosa; parents were proud of their children's English and accents, and saw little need to maintain Xhosa in the home.

The sample size and geographical (Eastern Cape) location of de Klerk's (2000) study, inevitably, makes it difficult to generalise across black communities as a whole; as does my own small sample, although it is more geographically spread. However, I found, as is discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, a range of apparent parental attitudes as described by their children, from aggressive African-language maintenance through to parents similar to those in de Klerk's study. Nonetheless, I suggest along with Mesthrie (2008) that claims of the imminent death of African languages, even among middle class youth, are overblown.

Recently, Khaya Dlanga (2012: 11) has commented in his *Cape Times* column that, as a headline, 'Our tongues [are] being ripped out' due to the former Model C schools' dropping of African languages even as a second language option. He blames this partially on black parents who, he writes, 'are to blame for not forcing school governing bodies to take African languages seriously. They have participated in the Bantu Educationisation of their children. Worse, some of them speak only English to their children at home, robbing them of a huge part of their identity'. As will be seen in Chapter 3, this may be partly true, in the case of some of my speakers' parents – but again, not all. The situation is clearly more complex than Dlanga suggests, but the fear that African languages will be lost at least among the Model C generation is real and not entirely unfounded.

What Dlanga does not mention, but which will be a natural result of the disappearance of African language teaching from schools, is the lack of literacy in black students' home languages that will result. Among my own speakers, literacy in their home language is very rare. How this will affect their ability to use these languages for purposes other than conversation is therefore a real cause of concern.

### **1.7 Definitions of the 'middle class'**

As I argue in Chapter 2, my rule-of-thumb definition of the black middle class stems automatically from entry into the former white school system; however, there are other, more rigorous definitions of what the middle class in South Africa means. Thus Nhlapo and Anderson, in an undated report online report based on the 1998-1999 October Household Surveys, the 2000-2001 Labour Force Surveys, and the 2002-2006 General Household Surveys, define middle class South Africans as those who:

- live in formal housing
- have a water tap in their dwelling

- have a flush toilet in their dwelling
- use electricity as their main light source
- use electricity or gas as their main cooking source
- have a landline telephone, or a member of the household has a cell phone.

They also mention education and a managerial or other professional job as likely indicators. For my speakers, all of the above criteria apply (or in the case of jobs, will likely apply in their post-university lives), and most if not all come from backgrounds considerably more wealthy than the above bare minimum requirements, which are low by both white South African and by many countries' standards, suggest. I therefore do not want to enter into complex arguments about the definition of the black middle class; as mentioned, I consider 'white' education, and therefore immersion in white middle class culture, a significant enough indicator of my speakers' class status.

### **1.8 Reports on the behaviour of this new generation**

Studies into youth culture among these 'Generation Y' youth provide rich material for descriptions of this generation's attitudes. Thus Mpolokeng (2002: 3) describes them based around a specific fashion label which aims to transcend the barriers between urban and township black youth. In doing so, she provides a description of this generation as 'straddling cultural spaces', so that the generation finds itself torn between its parents' struggle culture and the new youth culture. She writes that 'this Y Generation and its ideals are evident in most contemporary popular culture media, mainly music, television and fashion' (2002: 3). However, she notes the divide between the 'Model C' youth and township students, according to their education histories and hence exposure to different cultural norms. Thus 'Model C black youth, often of 'middle-class' parents (commonly in the nursing and teaching professions), exposed to 'white' or 'elite' culture with its 'European' ideas of art, intellectualism, culinary tastes and other such cultural loci' contrast with township youth, often in an uneasy relationship, as seen above in Maboyi's comments.

Nevertheless, Mpolokeng (2002) sees certain fashion labels and local media (radio stations and associated magazines) as attempting to, and succeeding in, bridging this divide, so that 'the Y movement is a socio-economically hybrid culture that appeals to black youth across the borders of class, education and of course musical preference and taste' (2002: 5). Whether some or any of my speakers feel themselves included in this hybrid culture is discussed in

Chapter 3. However, for reasons of space, their comments on music, sport and fashion are restricted to a short discussion with the concentration placed on their self-reports of linguistic behaviour, and attitudes to race and society, as well as their schooling experiences.

Nuttall and Mbembe (2008), in a book on emerging forms of expression and culture in Johannesburg, South Africa, also provide a useful source. Nuttall's chapter 'Stylizing the self' in particular focuses on what she calls 'Y culture', derived from the Y Generation, in Johannesburg. She claims that this 'is an emergent youth culture in Johannesburg that moves across various media forms and which generates a "compositional remixing" that signals the supercession of an earlier era's resistance politics by an alternative politics of style and accessorization, while simultaneously gesturing, in various ways, towards the past' (2008: 92-93). In this she expresses a similar idea to Mpolokeng, in suggesting the bridging culture that this generation represents; while also not losing focus on the divide between model C and township youth: in fact, she focuses on the same Loxion Kultcha brand that Mpolokeng refers to as a blend of the two, based on the disparate backgrounds of its founders. In these senses then, Generation Y or Y culture override the distinctions between my speaker sample and broader township youth; but the idea of a common youth culture that may be emerging persists. Even here, however, Nuttall's informants can recognise differences in fashion between Model C and township youth, even in such apparently neutral spaces as a popular mall in Rosebank where both styles are evident.

### **1.9 Recent media on the ex-Model C schools**

A recent court case involving the legality of barring a (black) child from a former Model C school again highlighted the glaring contrast between these schools and the remainder of the public school system; the judge described the schools as 'islands of privilege' (Williams, 2011). He went on to explain that 'school admission policies could easily be manipulated, leaving room for privileged schools to group together to close the doors of learning to the underprivileged children who were not from the rich'. The precise mechanism for this closure has already been briefly mentioned; it is further expanded in Chapter 2, where the full history of black schooling in South Africa is provided in order to give the context and background for the emergence of 'model C-ness' as a desirable, but for most unattainable, educational and social category.

More broadly, a January 2012 *Cape Times* front page headline quotes the chairwoman of the National Assembly's arts and culture committee as saying 'English has colonised us' (de Lange and Mpofu, 2012: 1). She cites as evidence the fact that 'English continues to be the de facto language of government communication and services', and criticises the (lack of) progress of the 'controversial' new SA Languages Bill, aimed at including more of the official African languages in public services, including education. In a follow-up article within this edition of the paper, however, Jones (2012: 4) explains that the new curriculum has led many schools in the Western Cape to 'drop' Xhosa as a subject, because 'there's no time to teach Xhosa' or rather, a third language, while most schools fall back on English and Afrikaans. This confirms Dlanga's statements above; and also confirms the educational picture of English strengthening while African languages are relegated to the background – a situation that can only add to the prestige of the ex-Model C schools.

### **1.10 Conclusions**

This chapter has briefly outlined the current educational situation in South Africa, with particular reference to the former white school system and the status of English. As should now be clear, the remainder of this thesis will explore these issues, first from a historical perspective and then from the perspectives of my interviewees. All that remains is to summarise my methodology.

The methodology too is fully explained in various sections of the remainder of the thesis; here it is only necessary to informally sum up the form my research has taken. Beyond the historical and political history of (particularly black) South African education (Chapter 2), I have interviewed 44 self-identifying 'black' UCT students, from most areas of the country, from former white schools, on their attitudes to their schooling, their languages and whatever else seemed to me or them relevant to the construction of their ethnolinguistic identities. The analysis of these interviews, as suggested above, forms the basis of Chapter 3. In addition to these recorded interviews, I recorded them reading a Word List in order to ascertain what, according to their most formal style, they perceived as the 'best' English accent they ought to produce for such a task. This is analysed in Chapter 4, as is their pronunciation in interview style of a particularly salient vowel class.

It is now necessary to turn to Chapter 2, the history of (black) South African education, in order to understand why the speakers I have interviewed, as well as so many other relatively

wealthy black South Africans, would choose to enter the former white schooling system, despite some of its apparent disadvantages.

## **Chapter 2: The history of black formal education in South Africa: how the ‘Model C’ generation came about**

### **2. Introduction**

Changes in the political and educational systems of South Africa have always gone hand-in-hand; an outline of the political history of South Africa is therefore necessary to explain the processes by which the current education situation came about. Changes in the education system itself are of course the most pertinent part of any such explanation; but educational policy and practice of necessity evolved within, and were in turn fundamental to, the various political systems which have governed ‘race’ in the country. Johnson, writing in 1982 (p214), described how at that point, “education [was] ... manipulated for stratification purposes ... [and] used as an instrument of social engineering.” Not only was education segregated for most of South African post-colonisation history, but also, it was used to justify the segregation and the political system(s) underlying it.

For my purposes here, a description of the period of transition to democracy of the early 1990s and beyond is crucial; but a more long-term history of South Africa is necessary to explain the choices my speakers, and their parents (who chose their schools), have made and will - at least by self-report - go on to make, concerning issues of language, class, education and identity. The section focuses primarily on education for black South Africans, although comparisons with particularly the white system are necessary to explain the post-apartheid changes which have given rise to the current situation.

### **2.1 History of black education in South Africa**

The history of formal education for black South Africans begins with the arrival, in 1652, of representatives of the Dutch East India Company in the Cape. Jansen (1990: 195) divides the history of black education in South Africa into five major periods, with the pre-colonisation stage referred to as ‘traditional African education’. Indigenous education before the arrival of the Dutch had been informal and “aimed at preparing black people for life within their own environment” (Nkabinde, 1997: 4); knowledge was transmitted orally by community elders, and practical life skills were learnt through experience. European formal education, therefore, with its different goals and methods, provided a clear break from this tradition. The multiple changes in the nature of the ‘environment’ for which learners were to be prepared equally necessitated a new type of education (SA Bureau of Racial Affairs, 1955; in Nkabinde,



1997). Nkabinde (1997: 4) claims that the advent of colonialism “coincided with the reduced impact of traditional education among blacks”; and so the role education played in black South Africans’ lives was fundamentally changed by the arrival of European colonialists.

Nevertheless, in the early days of Dutch presence in the Cape, there was nothing resembling a formal education system for anyone at all – not until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, in fact, was any such system established. Up to that point, “schooling for the Boers was limited to a few church-run elementary schools and the services of itinerant teachers” (Johnson, 1982: 215). The only schooling for Africans took the form of two slave schools. Beyond these elementary schools, there was “virtually no secondary education for anyone” (Johnson, 1982: 215). These slave schools are what Jansen (1990) refers to by naming this period in black education the ‘slave education’ era. It is this era that he describes as following the ‘evangelical curriculum’: in the slave schools, “the explicit purpose of schooling [...] was religious instruction”, with the goal of confirmation into the Christian religion. In 1658, Jan van Riebeeck, leader of the first group of settlers, entered in his diary:

Began holding schools for the young slaves – to stimulate the slaves’ attention while at school and to induce them to learn the Christian prayer.

(Du Plessis, 1965, in Jansen 1990)

For slaves (as well as the settlers’ own children), the Dutch occupation of the Cape thus meant in educational terms that the purpose of schooling was instruction in Christian doctrine.

The arrival of the British and their claiming of the Cape Colony, first from 1795-1803 (after which it was briefly returned to Holland), and then more permanently from 1806 on, represented the origins of the first formally organised education system in the territory, as well as changes in the curriculum. The British educational policy was from the beginning designed for the purpose of social control, although they were initially more concerned with the Dutch settlers than the indigenous black population. Primarily, this revolved around the “Anglicization” of the Afrikaners: a system of free schools was established in 1812, using English as the medium of instruction (Johnson, 1982). Under British rule, knowledge of English replaced Dutch as the only language of access to official posts in the colony; Lord Charles Somerset, in 1822, proclaimed English the only official language of the Cape Colony (Lass, 1978). This English-only policy extended to the schools: in addition to education now being provided solely through the medium of English, Dutch was entirely banned in schools,

even in the playground (Kamwangamalu, 2002). The Afrikaners naturally resisted this policy in the Cape Colony; this struggle against the dominance of the British/English speakers and their language policies by the Afrikaners has continued to play itself out throughout South African history. It was one of the contributing factors to the Boer War; and to the growth of Afrikaner nationalism. Nonetheless, the British persisted with their policy of Anglicization, despite Afrikaans being given equal official-language status with English upon the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910. Outside the Cape, in the Afrikaans republics, meanwhile, education for Dutch children continued in the same haphazard manner as before (Johnson, 1982).

The purpose of education for blacks, however, was not so much Anglicization as it was to “civilize and evangelize” them (Nkabinde, 1997: 4). Christian missionaries were therefore the most important agents in the process; along with spreading the gospel, they brought (English) literacy to their new converts, establishing schools for mainly black students (Johnson, 1982). 175 missionary societies involved themselves in the conversion of the population; and the colonial government, after 1853, was to add its resources to theirs, providing funding to the mission schools. At this stage, shortly after their abolition of slavery (1834) British attitudes to other ‘races’ were slightly more liberal than later in history; and the policy of racial segregation was not yet fully established. Thus in many of the schools, white and coloured children mixed with the black students (Johnson, 1982.)

Jansen (1990) refers to this period in educational history as that of ‘mission education’, since it was mission schools which provided the bulk of education to the population. In terms of curriculum, although the Dutch goal of evangelisation was continued, more attention was now paid to secular aspects of education. Since the various missionary societies, and individual schools themselves, had different policies and aims, a number of competing types of mission education arose (Jansen, 1990). In some schools, a more academic curriculum was followed, with the goal of preparing students for examinations which would qualify them for a school-leaving certificate, and for entrance into universities. Even at this early stage, this was criticised by some sectors of white society, as providing blacks with qualifications they were not entitled to use, and aspirations that could not be fulfilled within the society of the time. In addition to this academically-orientated curriculum, therefore, for black students in particular a different sort of curriculum was introduced in many schools, with a very different aim: the ‘Industrial Training Curriculum’ (Jansen 1990: 198).

Up until 1853, wars between the black and colonising white populations had been frequent; however, once these came to an end, the colonial government sought new ways to control the black majority, and to shape them into the labouring class required by the economy. It was to this end that the government began to provide funding to mission schools, giving them a measure over control of the curriculum. Thus in 1854, the then Governor of the Cape, George Grey, deliberately sought, by means of education, to establish social control over the African population, defining this explicitly as a means of “peaceful subjugation,” and a replacement for military campaigns (Jansen 1990: 198). Therefore much black education of this period became focused on the provision of industrial skills and occupational training, particularly in agriculture, in order to provide suitably-trained black labourers for white settler farms, which at the time formed the basis of the economy.

### **2.1.1 The effects of the diamond and gold mines on society and education**

However, the 1867 discovery of diamonds in Kimberley, followed by that of gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886, changed all this, and resulted in the complete restructuring of society in the four South African territories. The economy was suddenly transformed from that of a basically agricultural, rural society, into that of a rapidly urbanizing one around the new centres of wealth (Johnson, 1982; Jansen, 1990). The political result of this was that, as competition to control the new economy intensified, conflicts between the various ethnic groups arose. Primarily, the new industrialized economy led to competition between the British and the Afrikaners; the latter were in possession of the territories from which the new wealth stemmed, while the British possessed superior technical skills in making use of the new resources. This aspect of the general societal and economic conflict caused by the new mining industry was to lead, eventually, to the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902 (Johnson, 1982).

Meanwhile, new conflicts had also arisen between the white (both Afrikaans and English) and black populations: here, the struggle was not over control of the overall wealth, but over the jobs that it created, particularly for poor whites and blacks. Previously, whites had controlled the farming land, using black labourers to work it; now, the new mining industries and general urbanisation placed new demands on labour. As Welsh (1971: 222, in Jansen 1990) describes the situation:

“The general effect of industrialisation was to place whites and non-whites in a more acutely competitive situation, and education, depending on its content and the extent to which it was made available to different groups, might promote or prevent this competition.”

It was at this point in South African history, therefore, that education, or its absence, began to be most deliberately used as a tool for the economic exploitation of black South Africans. While previously a major goal of black education had been the provision of skills, to be used in agriculture, now growing opposition to the education of Africans (particularly from poor whites) stemmed from the realisation that the skills provided in education would allow the black labour force equal access to job opportunities in the new economic environment. Afrikaners, in particular, felt themselves threatened by the conditions of the new economy; although it was in the Boer territories that gold and diamonds, the source of the changes, were discovered, Jansen (1990: 198) claims that they were afraid that, as simple agriculturalists, they would be “forced into subservience by the more sophisticated British settlers”. At this subservient level, therefore, competition for employment with black labourers became a threat; and education was soon recognised as the key to the removal of this threat. Unequal education would allow Afrikaners to gain economic and political status above that of the black population; and campaigns against black education therefore arose.

Removing educational opportunities from the black population therefore both protected the poor whites, and allowed the indigenous population to be shaped into the unskilled labour force that rising industrialisation required (Johnson, 1982; Nkabinde 1997). Thus it was from the 1890s that whites began to argue most strongly that members of the different ‘race’ groups should be separately and differently educated, in order for each to be moulded into what was seen as their appropriate place in society.

### **2.1.2 The advent of public education for whites**

In 1892, therefore, in response to these pressures, a new type of public school system was established in the Cape; the new schools meant that white children no longer needed to be educated in the mission schools. The black population was not included in the new school system, though mission-school education continued. The state schools were intended to provide superior education to that given to blacks, in order to ensure white economic and political superiority. Brook (1996: 206) describes this turn of events, regardless of any

specific economic source, as inevitable, since “attitudes towards Africans or nonwhites in general were part of a tradition of British and other colonial thinking shaped by racism and denial,” as evidenced by similar policies in other British colonies. The turn away from ‘mixed’ schools of the earlier mission variety, then, can be seen as a reversion to type, rather than a full-scale turnaround from the more ‘liberal’ thinking of the earlier 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Upon establishing whites-only schools, the government withdrew most of its funding from the mission schools, and began for the first time to pursue a deliberate policy of racial segregation in education. Since the new policy meant that any education for blacks must be discouraged, in order to protect white interests, it was now argued that blacks must finance their own education (Johnson, 1982). Government funding of black schools was therefore cut to a bare minimum; and by the time that the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, government spending on white versus African education, per capita of population, stood at a ratio of R333 to R1 (Malherbe, 1977, in Johnson, 1982). From 1922 to 1945, a fixed sum of only R680, 000 a year was spent on African education, while this was supplemented by a fifth of the revenue from a ‘general tax’ levied only on Africans (Johnson, 1982). The racial and economic stratification of South African society, then, was most clearly set in place by the education policies of this period. In this period, in the absence of government spending, missions were responsible for 90 percent of the costs of black education: in 1926, the various missionary societies (no longer state-subsidised) ran 2,702 schools for Africans with 215,956 pupils; while the state ran only 68 schools for Africans, with 7,710 pupils (Behr and Macmillan 1966: 326, in Johnson, 1982). Missionary control of black education continued up until the advent of Bantu education under the Apartheid government; after this point, most of the mission schools were forced to close (Hofmeyr and Lee, 2004).

### **2.1.3 ‘Native education’: the change in missionary schooling**

In comparison with the schools for black children that were run by the state after 1954, the mission schools of this era were in fact less restrictive in terms of educational content. Nevertheless, despite being financially less dependent on the state, their curriculum choices were shaped and constrained by white public opinion, and eventually by state-mandated curricula (Jansen, 1990). In order to protect white economic supremacy, therefore, the earlier industrial training curriculum was abandoned. Jansen (1990) refers to this period as ‘Native education,’ within the framework of the ‘differentiated curriculum’. Calls for a differentiated curriculum were made as early as 1889, when the Superintendent General of Education in the

Cape argued in parliament that the colony needed “a differentiated education thereby ensuring that the Whites maintained their supremacy, while the mass of Africans were confined to a humbler position” (Burchell, 1976: 70, in Jansen, 1990). However, it was only after the formation of the Union in 1910, when the four territories were joined into a single state, that separate curricula for white versus black children were officially introduced, at the primary school level (Jansen, 1990). The syllabus for black pupils was, predictably, designed to prevent them from acquiring the skills and knowledge that would enable them to compete on an equal level with their white counterparts in the labour market; Dube (1985: 8, in Jansen 1990) states that “the main purpose of Native education was to handicap African children with the introduction of an inferior syllabus.”

In addition to being taught an ‘inferior’ curriculum, the absence of funding for black schools resulted in further problems in black education. Despite the missions’ continued commitment to ‘civilizing’ and evangelizing the black population, by 1936, the Interdepartmental Committee on Native Education reported that 70 percent of school-age black children were not at school. This was attributed to the severe shortage of facilities, which also meant that most of the existing schools were overcrowded and understaffed. In addition to this, for those black children who were in schools, the Commission reported a “marked disparity” between the standards found in black primary schools and those in white (Behr and Macmillan 1966: 346-347, in Johnson, 1982; Jansen, 1990). The report concluded with the observation that black education prepared children for a subordinate role in society, while white children were prepared for a dominant one (Wilson and Thompson 1975: 224, in Johnson, 1982).

Further 1922 legislation on differentiated syllabi was based on the premise that *certain* practical skills – only those seen as fitting for the social position occupied by blacks – were necessary; and emphasis was therefore placed on subjects such as hygiene, handwork, gardening, agriculture, housework and needlework (Jansen, 1990). In other words, black children were to be provided only with the skills that would enable them to grow up into domestic servants of the white population. In addition, this legislation mandated the teaching of the ‘vernacular’, or African mother tongue, to all black children in primary school (under later apartheid legislation, this would be further extended; see below). In high schools, although there was more similarity between the curricula in white and black schools, nevertheless, the policy of non-academic education continued – for example, in *The African Teacher* in March 1943, a columnist pointed out that the insistence by the Orange Free State

education department that black high schools teach agriculture rather than mathematics, meant that “the African is being converted into a good and useful kitchen and garden servant rather than a good and useful citizen of the country” (cited in Jansen, 1990: 199-200).

By this point, black schools’ facilities had been allowed to deteriorate further; and additionally, “a growing number of unqualified teachers were the norm in these schools” (Jansen, 1990: 200). Meanwhile, the continued racial segregation and differentiated curricula of the schools were legitimised by appeals to the different life-possibilities open to black South Africans, which were presented as natural and inevitable – thus the educationist Pells (1938: 141, in Jansen, 1990: 200):

“What boots it to teach a man to read if he can never get hold of a book? Why teach him the use of table-cloths and cutlery, if he cannot afford to buy them? Why teach him agriculture when all the arable land is already occupied?”

Native education in mission schools, therefore, up to 1948, like the apartheid/Bantu education system which followed it, was designed to keep the black population subordinate to the white, by denying black students access to more than a basic education. Nevertheless, several aspects of this system were still preferable to its successor. As Kuper (1965: 169, in Jansen, 1990) describes it,

“Where the missionaries showed concern for the cultivation of the individual and his religious growth, there is now [in 1965] conversion to the tribal identity. Where the mission high schools assembled African students of varied tribal background, extending perspectives and loyalties beyond the traditional societies, the Bantu Education Schools seek their return to the tribal milieu. Where the missions cultivated English<sup>5</sup> as the medium of education ... Bantu education cultivates tribal sentiment through tribal vernaculars.”

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<sup>5</sup> Whether English itself as medium of education is preferable to mother-tongue instruction is naturally a contested point. Here, the point is the use of mother-tongue education to divide the black population along ‘tribal’/‘ethnic’ lines.

#### **2.1.4 Bantu Education and mother tongue medium of instruction**

By contrast, then, this system and these schools, whatever their failings, were in many senses preferable to the later developments in black South African education. Following the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, the (Afrikaner) National Party (NP) was eventually elected to power in 1948. The most important result of this shift in power, which had up to this point remained in the hands of white English-speakers, was that the system of racial oppression and segregation was further formalised and extended into the now-infamous Apartheid system. Education, minutely segregated along racial and ethnic lines, was to play a central role in the establishment and subsequent maintenance of this political system.

For close to a decade prior to their political victory in 1948, the National Party, well aware of the power and social control that the education system could wield, had been conducting a study of education in the country; the origins of this stemmed from their belief that the mission schools followed a liberal arts curriculum that they saw as “inappropriate” for black education (Jansen, 1990: 200). The result of this survey was published shortly before the election, as the Manifesto for Christian National Education (CNE) (Johnson, 1982). Although the primary concern of the document was the education of white Afrikaans children, the issue of black education was also raised, with the comment that “native education should be based on the principles of trusteeship, non-equality and segregation; its aim should be to inculcate the white man's way of life, especially that of the Boer nation, which is the senior trustee” (Robertson and Whitten 1978: 106-107; and Hirson 1979 :42, in Johnson, 1982).

Only months after their election victory, this plan was put into practice. The Eiselen Commission was appointed, with the purpose of “establishing a comprehensive policy for African education” (Johnson, 1982: 218). Among the duties of the Commission were:

“The formulation of the principles and aims of education for Natives as an independent race, in which their past and present, their inherent racial qualities, their distinctive characteristics and aptitude, and their needs under ever-changing social conditions are taken into consideration”

(Horrell, 1968: 4, in Johnson, 1982).

Additionally, they were to consider:

“the extent to which the existing primary, secondary and vocational education system for the Natives and the training of Native teachers should be modified in respect of



the content and form of syllabuses in order to conform to the proposed principles and aims, and to prepare Natives more effectively for their future occupations” (Horrell, 1968: 4, in Johnson, 1982).

The new education system, in line with Apartheid policy, was thus to be designed to separate the different ‘races’ of the country still further, by providing thoroughly separate, and very different, education for each group (Johnson, 1982). In terms of black education specifically, the system, in continuity from ‘Native Education’, was designed to ensure that black South Africans were still denied skills that might allow them to compete on equal terms in the labour market (even had this been possible - which it was not, due to various labour laws, both pre-existing and soon to be passed). The system was to ensure that they were “prepared...for their future occupations” as defined by the state, and no more. More ominously still, in order to ensure that the policy was not subverted, black teachers, also trained within the Bantu system (which extended to all levels of education), were to be denied access to knowledge that they might pass on to pupils (Johnson, 1982).

Despite testimony before the commission by black representatives, in 1953 this new pattern of black education was set by the passing of the Bantu Education Act: schooling was removed from the control of the missionaries and taken over by the state, and it became illegal to operate schools for black children without government permission. Prior to this, over 70% of ‘black schools’ had still been controlled by missionaries (with the remainder being state-run); now, however, all ‘native’ education was to be controlled by the new Department of Native Affairs (Pampallis, 1991).

The new education system, as with all Apartheid institutions, was thoroughly racially segregated – this institutional separation, as Brook (1996: 208) puts it, “result[ed] in one of the world’s most complex, expensive bureaucracies,” where “all government agencies and facilities existed in quadruplicate.” The four ‘races’ as recognised by the government – White, Coloured, Indian/Asian and African/Bantu – were required by the Population Registration Act of 1950 to register for the categories that determined where they could live, work, and attend school; as well as affecting myriad other aspects of their lives. This level of segregation resulted in the formation of what Zegeye (2001: 10) calls “politically constructed ‘communities’”, in which people classified as members of the same race group were legally required to live, go to school with, worship with, and marry, only other members of the same

group; the overall result of this legislation was that interaction between members of the different groups was cut to a bare minimum.

The education system, therefore, became four systems: one for each 'race', which had its own schools and training colleges, employing only teachers registered as being of that race group. White education fell under the control of the white House of Assembly; Indian of the Indian House of Delegates, and coloured of the coloured House of Representatives. Black education<sup>6</sup>, meanwhile, since the black population was denied even the minimal level of political representation provided to the Indian and coloured groups, was controlled by the Department of Bantu Education (later renamed the Department of Education and Training). Administering these four systems were 19 different education departments. However, despite this splintered structure, education was heavily centralized, such that the government, via each of its various departments, retained full control over all aspects of the curricula and the hiring of teachers, and full control over schools. Examinations were centrally set and marked, further ensuring that curriculum changes in schools would be futile; additionally, regular inspections of classrooms, monitoring teaching methods and lesson content, ensured that the centralised syllabi were strictly adhered to (Zegeye, 2001; Jansen, 1988) (see also below).

Dr Verwoerd, the Minister of Native Affairs at the time (and later Prime Minister), articulated the motives behind the Bantu Education Act as follows:

It is the policy of my department that (Bantu) education should have its roots entirely in the Native environment and Native community. There Bantu education must be able to give itself complete expression and there it will have to perform its real service. The Bantu must be guided to serve his own community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his own community, however, all doors are open. For that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community while he cannot and will not be absorbed there. Up till now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and practically misled him by showing him the green pastures of the European but still did not allow him to graze there. This attitude is not only uneconomic because money is spent on education which has no specific aim, but it is even dishonest to continue with it. The effect on the Bantu community we find in the much-discussed frustration of educated Natives who can find no employment which is acceptable to them. It is abundantly clear that

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<sup>6</sup> In the urban areas; each of the ethnic 'homelands' (see below) had its own education system, though these were in reality still centrally controlled.

unplanned education creates many problems, disrupts the communal life of the Bantu, and endangers the communal life of the European. (Geber and Newman, 1980, in Nkabinde 1997).

It is therefore evident that, although 'Native education' had similar aims to those pursued by Apartheid education, the new policy was based on the perception that even Native education had been too generous to the black population. The new system went far further than Native education in terms of the nature and extent of social stratification and segregation.

The emphasis on the need for the separate 'communities' or 'races' to develop in their own way and without reference to one another was central to Apartheid policy: 'separate development' was the term used to attempt to legitimise many of Apartheid's policies. Far from allowing for "all doors [to be] open [to "the Native"] "in his own community", the 'separate development' policy, announced in 1951, in reality meant the continued economic development of the white population, while other races were repressed, educationally and economically, in order to keep them in a position from which they would provide, as above, "certain forms of labour". As Nkabinde states (1997: 6), "the government's interest was to educate more blacks to suit the needs of the country" as they perceived them; thus 'unplanned education' was to be replaced with a system designed to do precisely this.

In addition to legitimising educational Apartheid, the rhetoric of 'separate development' provided the government with an official explanation for the creation of 'tribal homelands' or 'Bantustans,' in which different groups within the black population were to be confined according to the state definition of their ethnicity (Johnson, 1982). By appealing to the notion that South Africa was made up of 'many nations', with different needs and different directions of 'development', the state (via the Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970) stripped black South Africans of their citizenship, and transferred it to their various 'homelands' as chosen by the state (Brook, 1996)<sup>7</sup>. As well as keeping most of the land, wealth and resources in (white) 'South Africa', this enabled the state to strictly control the movements of black South Africans, so that their entry into 'South Africa' was purely as migrant labour, under strict conditions. The various homelands were, in theory, politically independent of South Africa, although in reality this was far from the case (Zegeye, 2001).

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 4, on F23, who grew up in one of these for part of her life.

The true aims of Bantu education within the framework of separate development, were, broadly, to

(a) provide some basic education for blacks, (b) provide a system of education that enforced ethnicity, (c) divide permanently the black population into manageable compartments, and (d) provide a form of education that promoted technical training at the expense of critical thinking or education geared towards active participation in shaping one's own life. (Nkabinde, 1997).

With reference to (b) and (c), Bantu Education specifically provided not only for the segregation of the 'races', but also of the population along lines of 'ethnicity'. The concept of ethnicity used by the government at this time was tied to a complex system involving language, customs, and the 'ethnic homelands', with the intention to divide and rule: black South Africans were not to unite around the commonalities of blackness and oppression, but to devolve into much smaller and as Nkabinde (1997) puts it, more 'manageable' groups.

In addition to this attempt to prevent black South Africans from uniting into a political force, Bantu education aimed to prevent Africans from rebelling against their assigned role. As Arnold (1981, in Nkabinde, 1997) explains, the system was designed not only to produce the black labourers that the white economy required, but also to ensure that black thinkers, with the potential to become political leaders, were *not* produced: Bantu education deliberately attempted to stunt the intellectual development which would enable black people to take control of their own lives. This policy was visible throughout the Bantu education system, but most importantly carried through into tertiary education.

The 'black' curriculum, therefore, was geared towards the production of black interpreters, porters, religious ministers, teachers and nurses (Nkabinde, 1997), as the highest end of the employment scale they were allowed to rise to (it is no coincidence that the parents of many of my 'young black middle class' speakers are teachers, nurses and ministers<sup>8</sup>). On the other hand of course, the policy for white education was geared towards providing future leaders and captains of industry. Just as black education strove to enforce a sense of inferiority, white

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<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey (pers. com.) notes that this factor ought to have had an effect on the upbringing of my speakers, in that their parents were part of the history of resistance to 'Bantu education'. Interestingly, none of my speakers indicated any level of awareness of this, apart from F10 who comments that when she was a child (but not, apparently, now with her younger siblings), her parents were '*still very angry with white people*,' but mostly about having to speak English – which did have an apparent effect on her HL maintenance. Others indicate only that their parents wanted them to have 'better' education than they themselves received, generally in a tone indicating that they were stating the obvious.

education was designed to do the opposite for white youth: the social engineering was not limited to determining future occupation (and hence socio-economic status); it was also intended to ensure that this state of affairs went unquestioned. Nkomo (1990, in Nkabinde, 1997) therefore sums up the aims of the entire Apartheid educational system as follows:

1. To produce a semi-skilled black labour force to minister to the needs of the capitalist economy at the lowest possible cost and earlier on. Especially after the introduction of the Bantu Education Act, it was intended to blunt competition with white workers.
2. To socialize black students so that they can accept the social relations of apartheid as natural, that is, to accept the supposed superiority of whites and their own inferiority.
3. To forge a consciousness and identity accompanied by a sense of superiority among whites.
4. To promote the acceptance of racial or ethnic separation as the natural order of things or as an arrangement better suited for South Africa's complex problems of national minorities that can only be solved through the separation of the races or ethnic groups.
5. To promote black intellectual underdevelopment by minimizing the allocation of educational resources for blacks while maximising them for whites.

In terms of the content of education, all core syllabi and examinations had already been centralised since 1918, and were determined by the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB), a statutory body made up of representatives of the various education departments. Under the Apartheid government, this centralized authority worked within the framework of Apartheid policy; and Jansen refers to a "bureaucratic and authoritarian line of control" over syllabus content, running from the government, through the JMB, all the way down the hierarchy, through the various departments, circuit inspectors, subject advisors and principals, until it reached the teachers and students themselves (1988: 379). Thus while, within the 'separate development' ideology, education was regarded as an 'own affair', to be administrated and run by each 'race' for themselves, curriculum was reserved as a 'general affair', controlled by the central Department of National Education (Christie, 1990). In addition to providing further legitimisation for segregation, the concept of 'own education' allowed the government to entrench further, via educational content, the senses of ethnic identity that were intended to prevent the black majority from uniting.

However, despite the restrictive control over black education exercised by the National Party government, and the overt use of education as a means of social control, Jansen (1990) argues that in fact, the new Bantu Education curriculum, introduced in 1956, was seen by liberal

critics of education at the time as an actual improvement, in educational terms, over the previous Native education syllabi. His argument is however that this improved curriculum, and the subsequent further changes in 1976 - by which black and white students were taught the same syllabus and wrote the same examinations - were nonetheless irrelevant in terms of any positive changes for black students: institutional factors prevented them from having any real effect. Institutionalized 'ideological forms', such as the notion of white supremacy, were taught throughout the education system as a matter of course, in an effort to legitimise apartheid policy and represent the racial (later amended to 'cultural') hierarchy as natural. Thus within the curriculum there was a distinct bias towards white achievements; history was distorted so as to present white superiority as historical fact. Additionally, the 'institutionalization of educational inequality' meant that despite using, in theory, the same curriculum as white schools, black schools lacked the facilities to implement it: discriminatory funding practices meant overcrowding, poor or no classroom equipment and under-qualified teachers. The third institutional factor which Jansen sees as negating the benefits of the curriculum is the broadest: the institutionalized racism within South African society in general. Even had black schools been able to implement the curriculum in the same way as white schools did, and even had black students been wholly unaffected by the racist ideology it promulgated, the socio-economic structure of the country meant that educational improvements could not carry over into the economic sphere. Thus allowing black students access to the same curriculum as white was an empty gesture; an act of political appeasement that in reality had no effect on the situation. As Jansen sums up the situation, 'the particular institutionalized context of Black schooling neutralizes the curriculum in terms of its potential for empowerment, both educational and economic' (1990: 202-203).

#### **2.1.5 Mother tongue instruction**

In addition to controlling – and limiting - the content of black education, a further aspect of Bantu education, and apartheid education in general, continues to have important implications in the present: the mandated use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction. Partly as a result of its origins in the Afrikaner nationalist movement, which had always centred strongly on the use of Afrikaans (by Afrikaners) as an inalienable cultural right, the National Party government made mother-tongue instruction compulsory in early

education for all race groups<sup>9</sup>. Bantu education therefore, in line with the policy of separating people into ‘ethnic’ groups (along linguistic lines), replaced the medium of instruction in primary schools, which under missionary control had been mostly English, with mother tongue instruction. Black children were initially to be taught in their mother-tongues for the first seven years of schooling, after which an abrupt switch to either English or Afrikaans would be made. In practice, this meant in most cases to English, as the preferred language (see Chapter 1 for a brief history of English’s rise to prominence as the language of choice). By the 1970s, resistance to mother-tongue education meant that the stage of this language-of-instruction transfer had been dropped to after the fourth grade; and in 1979 it was lowered to after the third grade (de Klerk, 2002).

Although resistance to Bantu education has long been closely associated with resistance to the medium of instruction policies, language issues were not, of course, the only points of contention. Nevertheless, it was a language issue that sparked off the 1976 Soweto Uprisings, in which black school children took to the streets and clashed with police, and several students were killed. Here, though, it was not mother-tongue instruction that was at issue: rather, it was the government’s attempt to implement Afrikaans as a language of instruction, in equal proportion to English, in black schools after the years of MT-instruction. This already indicates the political status of the two languages within the black population (de Klerk, 2002).

Following 1976, the project for the enforced use of Afrikaans was abandoned; however, public dissatisfaction with Bantu Education, and apartheid in general, continued to grow. A series of uprisings and clashes between the government and various resistance organisations followed, with harsher means of control, and eventually the declaration of a state of emergency, the government’s response to protest. Education remained a central point of contention, with ‘Education and Liberation’ becoming a battle-cry among activists (Brook, 1996). Later, however, mass protests against the system took the form of school boycotts, with the result that much teaching time was lost, exacerbating the educational poverty of many black students.

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<sup>9</sup> For white children (English or Afrikaans-speaking), education in the mother tongue continued throughout their education, in addition to language instruction in the other official language (English or Afrikaans).

### **2.1.6 Resistance to Bantu education**

In the mid-1980s, the various organisations involved in the resistance movement convened a group of “educational, student and community organisations”, to co-ordinate the resistance to Apartheid education (Harley and Wedekind, 2004: 196). This organisation, the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC; ‘Crisis’ later amended to ‘Co-ordinating’), began a campaign for ‘People’s Education’, arguing that since the current system was unacceptable, a new one needed to be developed. However, Harley and Wedekind argue that while People’s Education was very successful in mobilising the masses against Apartheid education, “very little substance was developed to mount a serious challenge to the dominant curriculum”.

Thus, when the Apartheid state began to admit its failure, heralded by the unbanning of the ANC and other liberation movements in 1990, the NECC began a massive National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI). The purpose of their report (submitted in 1993) was to research policy alternatives for education, on behalf of the ANC, based on the principles of a curriculum supporting non-racism, non-sexism, democracy, equality and redress (Harley and Wedekind, 2004: 196). The eventual outcomes of this investigation, and the massive curricular changes introduced by the new, post-1994 government, are discussed below; now, however, the process by which the immensely complex Apartheid education system was converted to the current one, resulting in (a limited number of) ‘racially’ integrated schools, must be examined.

### **2.1.7 Dismantling apartheid education: creating ‘mixed’ schools**

As the previous section has shown, education in South Africa has been contested political ground from the earliest days of the colonial period; its use as a means of social control was well-understood by the black majority political movements before the advent of democracy. Thus during the political changeover of the early 1990s, the reform of education policy was one of the first priorities of the new democratic government (Harley and Wedekind, 2004). The major policy changes are outlined below, in section 2.2, which explains the current structure of the system as well as the stages it has passed through since 1990. However, although the education system in general was completely overhauled, for my purposes it is more important to focus on changes in those sectors of the system which resulted in some level of ‘racial’ integration in schools. For various reasons (outlined below), it is the former white school system that has seen the greatest amount of change in terms of the ‘racial’ composition of its student body. Although the privileged ex-white schools serve only 8.5% of



the school-going population, they are nonetheless important in socioeconomic terms, as the small but important group emerging from such schools will command considerable economic power in the future; and because this group can also provide a model (whether positive or negative) for the new types of race-relations emerging in the country (Tikly and Mabogoane, 1997: 161).

Therefore, although more general policy changes will be referred to, those changes which affected this system specifically receive the most attention. In the sections below, the description of the former white system is divided into two aspects, public and private, since these school types have different histories of managing integration, and different policies towards it.

#### **2.1.7.1 Private schools**

Even before the post-apartheid implementation of the sweeping changes which adjusted the entire schooling system(s), certain private schools had already begun the process of (limited) racial integration. Since these schools were the first to attempt to address the problem of desegregation, their practices and existence must be acknowledged, because to a certain extent they formed the model on which later desegregation in the (white) state schools was based.

Growing public opposition to the policy of segregated education meant that, by the 1970s, certain private and religious schools had begun to campaign for the right to enrol children of all races. Their official status, with regard to Apartheid policy, was already somewhat precarious – private schools, technically, were not allowed to exist, and the government had closed most church and mission schools for black children in the 1950s. However, it had largely ignored the white private schools up to this point (Hofmeyer and Lee, 2004). As long as they kept to the apartheid segregation policy, they had been safely left to themselves; but now the acceptance by some of them of black pupils inevitably drew the state's attention. At the time, the other (black, coloured and Indian) school systems were engaged in open resistance, boycotting schools and running 'awareness programmes' for students; the white private schools, meanwhile, focused attention on 'opening' their enrolment to limited numbers of pupils from these ethnic groups. The schools felt that, in the light of the educational crises in the country, particularly in the non-white school systems, they should make some effort towards reform within their own system (Christie, 1990).

The 'open schools' movement, as it was therefore called, was based entirely within the white, and private, education system. As a report from the Catholic school desegregation body at the time notes:

Though we are all convinced in principle that integration should work both ways, that blacks should be admitted to white schools and whites to black schools, we realise that in the existing situation it can in fact mean only admission of blacks to white schools, since black schools are far too overcrowded and ill-equipped to be able to cater for white pupils.

(Education Associations of Religious, undated; in Christie, 1990).

Thus, while other schools attempted to overthrow the entire school system, resistance in white schools, and these schools in particular, took the form of attempted reform within a section of that system. As the source of the above report suggests, it was the Catholic private schools that were the first to 'open' their admissions. In 1976, the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference decided to admit students from all race groups to their schools, in defiance of apartheid laws. Thus 75 private Catholic white schools were opened to those non-white students who met their entry requirements; and other private schools followed suit soon afterwards (Christie, 1990).

Inevitably, 10 years of legal dispute with the state ensued, during which many of the schools were faced with the prospect of enforced closure. Then, in 1986, the Private School Act was passed, which gave the schools legal recognition, and even some funding from the state (Christie, 1990). However, this victory, as Hofmeyr and Lee (2004: 152) argue, was a result more of the state's utilitarian attitude than any weakening in apartheid beliefs: the 1981 reformist De Lange Committee Report on the state of education had indicated that these schools in fact played a useful role, providing a 'pressure valve' in which non-racial tendencies could be exercised, while removing these disruptive elements from the public school system. Thus the Private Schools Act both confirmed the government's recognition of this role, while giving it a measure of control over the schools, by requiring them to register with the state.

Although the open schools represented the first South African attempts for centuries to integrate students of different race groups, there were limits to what they could achieve; and

their efforts have met with criticism from some educationists. Although Brook (1996: 211) saw these schools as 'pioneering a racially integrated system that might extend to all schools in the future system', others have seen them less positively. Christie (1990) details some of the problems at the time, and the likely reasons for the schools' perceived shortcomings. Most of her criticisms relate to the fact that, despite explicit commitment to change, the schools themselves did not in fact alter in any way, apart from the presence of non-white pupils. Although they originally intended to alter the culture of their schools, in order to accommodate pupils from very different backgrounds to their usual intake, in most of the schools the implicit policy regarding the new pupils was one of assimilation: the curriculum and ethos of the schools remained white-oriented, and little was done to acknowledge the different cultures, beliefs or habits that black children might bring to the school.

Nevertheless, it had originally been stated at the start of the open schools movement that the introduction of pupils from other race groups would necessitate substantial changes. Thus in 1977, the Secretary of the Catholic Department of Schools acknowledged the need for:

...the introduction of a completely new educational policy and programme which will include black cultural values as well as white, in such a way that Black pupils will not merely be assimilated into the existing system but that they will remain authentic Blacks enriched by African culture<sup>10</sup>.

(in Christie, 1990: 41)

In later statements, the Department went on to recognise the need for racially integrated staff bodies, as well as the introduction of African languages and cultural studies into the curriculum. However, despite this explicit recognition of the fact that change would be necessary, in practice this was largely ignored. Christie attributes this lack of progress, in the first 10 years of the open schools' existence, to the fact that the schools were, by necessity, focused more on their legal struggles with the state than on curricular changes.

In addition, the obvious superiority of these schools to the majority of state schools, in terms of facilities, class sizes and teacher qualifications, meant that their assumptions about what constituted good education could go largely unchallenged: reform of education in general was seen as reform that ought to be towards what these schools already represented, so that

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<sup>10</sup> Exactly what is meant by this is unclear; however, the intention to avoid assimilation was nevertheless made explicit.

change within the open schools themselves (apart from the addition of black students) often seemed unnecessary. Further, the small numbers of black students permitted by the state to enrol, and the failure to introduce non-white teachers, meant that the schools remained predominantly white, not only in culture but also numerically, thus strengthening the chances that black pupils would simply assimilate (Christie, 1990).

Change in the curriculum was also constrained by the need for schools to be seen to maintain the 'standards' expected of them. Many of these private schools were long established institutions, with traditions that resisted change in any case; but the fear of 'dropping standards' was also driven by market forces: a school whose standards were perceived to be falling due to the acceptance of non-white pupils could quickly lose admissions, and hence income from fees. Thus changes to the established matriculation curriculum had to be approached cautiously, for fear of being perceived as a lowering of these standards (Christie, 1990).

Thus although the open schools movement was the first sign of the possible collapse of apartheid segregated education, it nonetheless faced several problems which made it an unlikely candidate for the model of a successfully integrated system which would arise after the fall of apartheid. However (see below), many of the criticisms levelled at these schools are also used to argue against the present system, where the now-'integrated' former white schools are constrained by many of the same factors retarding change in the early open schools.

#### **2.1.7.2 Private/Independent schools today**

Since the official desegregation of schools, no school in South Africa may discriminate on the basis of, among other factors, race; and thus are all, in theory at least, 'open'. The private school sector is no exception; however, the types of private school (now officially referred to as 'independent schools') available have diversified since the days of the original open schools movement. There are now an ever-increasing number of independent schools operating in predominantly 'black' areas, in response to the demand for education among the black population, which the state still cannot meet. However, these schools, having been established as a deliberate response to the shortcomings of black education in the townships,

have an entirely black student base; and because they are “not integrated”, are not relevant for my purposes here.

The ‘original’ private schools – those established by and originally for the white population – remain, and they, like the former white state schools, are sites of many of the most comprehensive ‘integration’ processes currently taking place. Additionally, several other types of independent schools have emerged, which are also sites of ‘integrated’ schooling. Hofmeyr and Lee (2004: 143) describe the independent schooling sector in South Africa as having ‘changed significantly in the last decade’, and provide a comprehensive overview of the types of non-public school now available.

The definition of what constitutes an ‘independent school’ in South Africa is somewhat fraught, both in terms of its difference from the meanings of the term in other countries, and in the public perception of what the terms ‘independent’ and ‘private’ refer to. Although the term ‘private’ is no longer used officially, in everyday language it continues to exist. Moreover, many of the schools seen (and referred to) as ‘private’ by the general public, are not in fact private or independent at all, according to the official definition. For example, a category of ‘public schools on private property’, including schools owned by religious organisations - such as many Catholic schools - which in most countries would be seen as private, are considered public schools under Section 14 of the South African Schools Act of 1996 (Hofmeyr and Lee, 2004: 144).

These schools, however, are still regarded as private by the majority of South Africans (including some of my informants). Moreover, at least some of the general public also appears to view the former white model C schools (see below), as ‘private’<sup>11</sup>, although they too are part of the state system, and have been since before the use of the model C category, as these were originally the schools established for white children under the apartheid government (Hofmeyr and Lee, 2004).

What this public confusion seems to imply, therefore, is a recognition of the prestige value of all schools that previously formed part of the white education system. If old, established,

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<sup>11</sup> Further clouding the issue is the existence of the term ‘semi-private’, often also referring to former model C schools, whose funding is only partly government subsidised. According to the official definition, however, ‘semi-private’ schools do not exist.

academically successful, well-resourced private schools, located in suburbs formerly zoned 'white', attract prestige, then so too do the well-resourced 'ex-white' suburban schools that were in fact government-run, and continue to be officially part of the public school system. Thus although there may be perceived differences between the prestige levels of each type of school in some sectors of society, in others, the fact that a school was once part of the white system is sufficient to grant it high prestige<sup>12</sup>.

Public perceptions aside, however, Hofmeyr and Lee (2004) provide a system of categorisation of those schools that are officially recognised as 'independent'. The older independent schools - such as the 'open' schools discussed above - are mostly identified in their typology as religious schools. In 1992, Muller (in Hofmeyer and Lee, 2004) described what were categorised as the 'traditional private' schools as 'predominantly white, predominantly church-affiliated, and - Catholic and Jewish schools aside - self-consciously [promoting] a certain Anglocentric ethos'. Hofmeyr and Lee (2004), however, note that by 2003, there was a far wider range of religious schools available, most of which, being new, would not fall under Muller's categorisation of 'traditional' private schools. As many of these (such as Hindu and Muslim schools) would not be expected to have an 'Anglocentric' or 'white' orientation, it seems at least possible that they would not be recognised by the general public as 'private' schools in the same sense in which the older private schools are, or attract as much prestige as the former white schools. They are also likely to produce different linguistic outcomes from the 'traditional' private schools.

The religious independent schools make up the majority of the independent school sector in South Africa, with over 46% falling into this category (HSRC in Hofmeyr and Lee, 2004). However, Hofmeyr and Lee (2004) note that the religious, 'traditional private' schools themselves - mostly Catholic and Anglican - are in large part converting from independent status to that of 'public schools on private land', for financial reasons; as noted above, this means that they officially become part of the public school system. In the eyes of the public though, many of these schools probably remain the embodiment of the term 'private school', thus making them (informally) 'private' but (officially) not 'independent'.

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<sup>12</sup> As will be shown in Chapter 3, many of my informants seemed unclear about the differences between private and ex-model C schools; my argument here is further supported by the fact that many of them seemingly unquestioningly refer to the type of school they attended as simply a 'white school'.

Other than religious schools, Hofmeyr and Lee (2004) identify a further seven types of independent schools. Community schools, often established in rural areas or inner cities and informal settlements, account for 28% of independent schools (HSRC, in Hofmeyr and Lee, 2004). Because of their location, they are highly unlikely to have a 'mixed-race' student body.

The range of independent profit-making schools now varies widely, and the sector caters for people from all socio-economic levels, from the high-fee, prestigious and academically high-achieving schools such as Reddam, to what Hofmeyr and Lee (2004: 155) term the 'lower-income "street academies"' [which] continue to cater for black learners'. The sector as a whole accounts for only 5% of independent schools (HSRC, in Hofmeyr and Lee, 2004).

Spontaneous or 'fly-by-night' schools arise in inner cities and informal settlements; as with many community schools this again means that the student populations are highly unlikely to be racially 'integrated'. Their very nature makes them difficult to count; the HSRC found that they account for less than 1% of independent schools, while Hofmeyr and Lee (2004) suggest the proportion may well be higher.

Expatriate schools, established primarily for the children of expatriate communities and diplomats, have shown no growth since 1990; and since they cater mainly for non-South Africans, are largely irrelevant to this study (Hofmeyr and Lee, 2004).

The above types of independent school are all fairly common internationally; and the preference for religious and community schools, as evidenced by their relative numbers, is typical of the pattern of independent schooling in sub-Saharan Africa (Hofmeyr and Lee, 2004). However, Hofmeyr and Lee (2004) also note the existence of some independent-school types in South Africa which are either unique to the context, or which are not generally considered as likely options in the independent-school sector in the African context. The first of these, 'non-profit schools specifically to counteract the apartheid legacy', are clearly South African inventions; they were established to serve poor black communities, in both urban and rural areas. The authors note that some of these have since become 'public schools on private property', since international funding has dried up.

A further option in South Africa, not usually considered in a 'third-world' context, is the presence of 'alternative schools' of the Waldorf or Montessori type, which have different approaches to education from the mainstream or traditional. These originally arose as a result

of demand from some sections of the white population; however, there is an increasing demand for alternative schooling among the (wealthy members of the) black population (Hofmeyr and Lee, 2004: 156). These schools may thus well be sites of some integration; and they account for some 5.5% of the independent schools in the country.

Although there are thus many different types of independent school in South Africa, the sector as a whole is not large: official statistics in 2000 showed that it accounts for only 2.1% of learners. 2003 research by the HSRC (Du Toit, 2003) estimated a higher figure of 3.2%; nevertheless, in relation to the education system as a whole, it is still very small. However, it retains its importance due to its very exclusivity: and if one discounts the burgeoning independent school industry catering for learners from poorer ('non-white') communities, this leaves the 'prestigious private' (independent) school sector even smaller: only 14% of independent schools charge fees greater than R18000 per annum - only increasing the prestige. It is in the higher-fee schools (as well as many former white state schools; see below) that middle class racial integration can be seen to be taking place, to a more or less limited extent.

As Hofmeyr and Lee (2004) explain, the state of education in South Africa was historically characterised by differentiated demand in white communities, requiring some schools independent of the state; and unmet demand in black communities, which could not be remedied by the private school sector as a result of government hostility, and poverty. Now, however, the sector as a whole has transformed to cater for all socioeconomic classes, leading to increasing numbers of 'black' independent schools; but additionally, differentiated demand has arisen in the wealthier sections of the black population - who increasingly choose high-fee schools such as the old 'private' schools. While the high fees still mean that these schools remain predominantly 'white', socioeconomic changes mean that more and more black students are moving towards this type of education; thus allowing for a level of integration into a changing middle class 'community,' through the schools. Hofmeyr and Lee (2004: 159) note that in comparison with figures available for seven such schools in 1990, the 2003 figures show that the ratio of black to white learners has generally increased, by as much as 50% in some cases. However, the school 'race' ratios in no way reflect the actual demographics of the country yet: in 2001, only 18.6% of learners in the old 'white' independent schools were 'not white' (11.5% black/African, 3.1% coloured, 4% Indian). Thus while the independent sector in general is almost representative of the general



population, the former 'white private schools' remain majority-white (Hofmeyr and Lee, 2004).

As with the earlier open schools, then, the ethos of many of these schools has likely not changed. Christie (1990) claims that a critical mass of 35% black learners in a school is necessary before the ethos of the school will change to reflect the new racial dynamics, and this has not been reached by the majority of the schools (see, however, F8 in Chapter 3 on changes in her school). Thus the dominant 'school culture' in the old white private schools is likely to remain white-oriented and assimilationist. However, Hofmeyr and Lee (2004: 159) claim that:

Many of the schools with this enrolment pattern are aware of the problem, and are making efforts to change their cultures to become more affirming of the heterogeneity of South African society. In many cases they have identified themselves as 'proudly South African' schools.

Whether these efforts will be successful remains to be seen. For the majority of my informants, changes of this sort had not begun by the time they left school.

The same factors affecting the increases in numbers of black students in the ex-white independent schools - increased black demand for prestigious, quality education, with the means to pay for it - also apply to the public schools which under apartheid were reserved for white students only. The following section examines the development of these schools, and the means by which they have, in the main, protected their middle-class status.

#### **2.1.7.3 Former white public schools – 'model C'**

In the (now former) white public school system, changes similar to those occurring in the private schools began somewhat later, and were initiated not by the will of the schools, but under the new government policies which arose during the period of changeover between the Apartheid system and the new regime. However, despite this difference, several of the major policy changes - most notably the decentralisation of control over education, and (closely linked to this) the introduction of school fees into the previously free education system - meant that the eventual results in both types of school were very similar. Racial demographics, and the resultant effects (or lack of them) on the schools themselves, are in many cases indistinguishable in former white public schools from those in the 'integrated' private schools, despite their apparently different motivations for change.

While the 1986 Private School Act, which finally officially allowed the ‘open’ private schools to enrol a limited number of black learners, had provided the first indication that the apartheid education system might be susceptible to change, 1990 saw the unveiling of a more comprehensive system of reform, affecting the schools run by the state. Black political organisations such as the African National Congress (ANC) were unbanned in 1990, as the Nationalist government recognised that Apartheid was crumbling; and negotiations began for a new dispensation. Education was already recognised as an important political issue, and all parties were keen to exploit its advantages as a means of political and societal reform. The first major changes took place under the National Party government, which in 1990 unveiled the first version of its Educational Renewal Strategy (ERS), a long-term plan for the development of a single, non-segregated education system.

Thus between 1990 and 1994, when the first democratic elections were held, the reorganisation of the public education system began. However, the first reforms affected mostly the white school system. Desegregation in this system began with the introduction of a number of new governance ‘models’ the schools could choose among. These so-called ‘Clase models’, named after the minister for white education at the time, were introduced in order to manage the issues of falling white enrolment figures and financial pressures, as much as they were a result of increasing political pressure (Tikly and Mabogoane, 1997). Initially, parents of children at these schools were allowed to vote for the model of their choice. The options consisted of model A, the complete privatisation of the school; model B, the retention of full state funding, but now allowing for 49% non-white enrolment; or model C – a “semi-private<sup>13</sup>”, state-aided option, where teachers salaries’ were for the most part paid by the state, while all other costs were to be covered by the introduction of school fees. In the original model C schools, as in model B, up to 49% black enrolment was permitted (Tikly and Mabogoane, 1997).

The introduction of school fees in the model C schools represented a major shift away from former policy, where all public white education had been free; and initially the majority of the schools voted for model B status, although a small number chose either A (becoming private) or C. However, government policy soon changed again, and almost all the former

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<sup>13</sup> As noted above the term semi-private is not an official one, but rather a colloquial one referring to the funding mechanism involved, and to some extent, the prestige attached.

white state schools were effectively forced to adopt model C funding methods by 1995, largely as a result of pressure from the by-then former government (Tikly and Mabogoane, 1997). Post-1994, all race quotas were officially abandoned, but apart from this change, the basic structure of the ‘model C schools’ remains in place in most of the former white schools; and although the name has been officially abandoned, colloquially, the term model C remains in common use to refer to former white public schools<sup>14</sup>.

In addition to the new funding mechanisms, multiple other changes were instituted, most crucially in terms of school governance. While apartheid education had been heavily centrally controlled, one of the major differences in the new system was the introduction of School Governing Bodies (SGBs). Later instituted throughout the new unified, non-racial education system, they originated politically from the demand for more control over schools by the parents and pupils themselves, rather than allowing policy and curriculum to be dictated by the state (Harley and Wedekind, 2004). Within the former white system, where they were first instituted, the motivation appears to have been similar, in terms of allowing the model C schools democratic control over their own policies; although, as will be argued below, this apparent democratic impulse had a significant subtext, in that it allowed the schools to effectively vote against the loss of the privileges they had always enjoyed.

The SGBs of each school, comprised of teachers, parents and (at secondary level) pupils, are elected by the school and parent community. Under the new policy, the individual SGB of each model C school was given substantial control over admissions policies, the cultural and religious ethos of the school, language policy, and to a certain degree, teacher appointments. They were also given the land, buildings and facilities of the school free of charge, freeing the state from responsibility for maintenance costs, now covered by the schools themselves through fees.

Thus the rigidly centralised apartheid education system was dismantled, handing control over many aspects of the schools’ policies over to the ‘school communities’ of parents and teachers, with the ostensible intention that this would encourage the development of a ‘market’ within education, where schools competed with one another for pupils, on the basis of their policies, achievements and subsequent learner enrolment. The notion of competition

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<sup>14</sup> Since this section covers the historical period in which the term ‘model C school’ was coined, used, and then officially abandoned, I continue to use it here throughout.

within the market is further encouraged by the policy of allowing the schools, using their own revenue from fees and other funding mechanisms, to supplement the salaries of teachers, and to hire additional teachers to those funded by the state – thus creating a market for ‘good’ teachers. Thus the devolution of control over the school from the state to the individual SGBs can be seen as the opening up of the schools from central control to that by market-driven forces (Tikly and Mabogoane, 1997).

This policy, within the framework of marketisation, can be seen to encourage a ‘diversification within the system’, allowing each school a substantial amount of control over the ‘ethnic’ characteristics of its learner population, via language policy and religious and cultural orientation. In addition, the abandonment of the policy of each school having a specific ‘catchment area’ for learner enrolment (which under the Group Areas Act, had provided further support for racial segregation), encourages the idea of parental ‘choice’ as the driving factor in who goes where; thus supporting the idea that schools must market themselves and compete for learners, and, via the learners, revenue from fees (Tikly and Mabogoane, 1997).

However, Tikly and Mabogoane (1997: 166-170) argue that the notion of parental choice in South Africa is essentially an illusion, or at best a smokescreen - not merely as a consequence of the high fees set by the (SGBs of) model C schools, or of their geographical location; but also as a result of social dynamics as they play out in terms of the nature of ‘choice’ as it is envisioned for black versus white parents. Internationally, the marketisation of education is usually discussed in terms of two particular benefits to the education system as a whole: firstly, an increase in parental choice and in their involvement in the education process (in South Africa, via the SGBs); and secondly in terms of the overall increased efficiency in the system that it is supposed to bring about. In South Africa, the notion of choice is particularly important politically; since choice in educational and most other terms was so patently absent under apartheid, it is central to the new regime’s political philosophy. However, Tikly and Mabogoane (1997:166) argue that in the second (1992) version of the ERS, ‘choice’ for white parents was construed as the choice of a collective community: ‘the language of “choice” was used as a bulwark against the supposed threat of cultural domination’. That is, the white parent communities of each school were expected to choose collectively to set policies which, within the bounds of the new constitution which was still being debated, would effectively preserve the schools as they were. On the other hand, ‘choice’ with regard to the new model

C school structure came to be 'synonymous for many with the rights of individual black parents [...] to send their children to the more historically privileged white schools' (Tikly and Mabogoane, 1997: 166-7). In this sense, the notion of 'choice' as it relates to model C schooling becomes polarised between collective white choice and individual black choice.

A further result of this apparent construal of choice in the minds of black parents is their relatively low involvement in the running of the schools themselves. Tikly and Mabogoane (1997) claim that in the schools they visited, while black parents were clearly deeply concerned with the progress of their own (individual) children, they had very little involvement in decision-making at the level of SGBs, and seemed content to leave educational matters in the hands of the (predominantly, if not completely) white staff; and of the white-dominated SGBs.

Thus this decentralisation of control both fell in with the new democratic principles driving the country, while absolving the state from direct responsibility for the individual policies of the schools themselves. In effect, by handing control over the 'ethos' of the schools to parents, the state (both pre-1994, and to a large extent under the current government) allowed the schools to maintain their exclusive status to a large extent. While admissions policies could no longer discriminate on the grounds of race, the introduction of fees, to be set by the schools themselves according to their needs, effectively meant that the majority of black parents could not 'choose' to send their children to former white schools, whose SGBs set their fees discouragingly high, both in order to maintain the privileged 'standards' the schools had enjoyed under the previous system (better facilities, better qualified teachers); and to ensure that the pupils entering the school came from fairly wealthy backgrounds. Black pupils who do enter the system are largely assimilated into the ethos of the school, since their parents' 'choice' in terms of their education consists merely of the choice to send them to these schools, but not to determine their fate once they are in them.

Essentially, this system has meant that the majority (but not all) of model C schools remain majority white in terms of student numbers, and certainly in terms of staff bodies; but a secondary effect has been the creation of a more 'racially integrated' wealthy middle class. Thus, a major result of the changes in education policy in relation to the creation of model C schools has been to shift the barriers separating South Africans towards a class distinction, and away from a racial one. Although the new dispensation has allowed the white population

to retain most of the privileges they enjoyed under Apartheid, it has also allowed for, or even encouraged, the entry into the 'middle classes' of a small minority of the black population. One obvious result of apartheid policy was that class in South Africa was intricately linked to race; although a very small black middle class existed prior to the 1990s, in general, race determined class. The new policies, however, have meant that although in the population at large, this remains unchanged, within the 'middle class' (however this is defined) integration of a sort has begun. For those black parents who can afford to send their children to the former white schools (whether private or public), such a move is in many senses an emblem of their class status, or of their aspirations for their own children in class terms. It is important to note here that changes in education policy, along with broader socio-economic changes, are in large part responsible for the current composition of the South African middle classes.

In the non-white schools, the changes in policy had different effects. In essence, the movement of children from racially segregated schools has been unidirectional: while former white schools have become more racially mixed (though not to the extent of representing actual national demographics), the former Department of Education and Training (DET) (black/African) schools are virtually unchanged. In 'racial' terms, there has been no change; as the most neglected and least well-equipped schools of the four systems, there is no incentive for other race groups to move into these schools; the pattern rather has been a limited movement out of them by those who can afford it. In the former coloured and Indian schools, there was also movement of black pupils into these schools, with the simultaneous movement of the wealthier coloured and Indian students into former white schools (Brook, 1996). In effect, the only segment of the South African population in which any sort of integration has occurred, is among those attending, or sending their children to, the wealthy, high fee-paying, and usually ex-white schools – the middle classes.

Christie (1995) argues even more strongly than Tikly and Mabogoane that this situation was deliberately brought about by the outgoing NP government during the negotiated settlement of the early 1990s – and suggests that it would (and now does) continue as a result of constitutional provisions that any changes to the system of school governance and funding must be extensively negotiated between the state and the schools. Her 1995 analysis foresaw the present results of the model C arrangement, as a result of her recognition of the devolution of power to the schools themselves as an exercise in 'legitimation' of white-school privilege. The entrance of a limited number of 'non-white' pupils into the system

would have been recognised as an inevitable result of the imminent political and economic changes; but the model C arrangement meant that effectively, these pupils would enter the system on the system's own terms, and, by preserving the 'ethos' of the schools, would simply be assimilated into (white) middle-class society.

## **2.2 Language and Education policy in the new South Africa**

The previous section has dealt with the effects of the post-apartheid education policy changes, particularly on the former white schools; here, the policies themselves, and their motivations, are more clearly outlined. However, as Jansen and Taylor (2003: 8) have commented, 'there are few modern democracies that have produced more policies, laws, and regulations to govern education than post-apartheid South Africa': for this reason, it is mostly those changes which have had effects relevant to my purposes that are discussed here.

As noted above, the first major change came about with the introduction of the Education Renewal Strategy (ERS) by the de Klerk government. In May 1990, the Minister of National Education announced the development of (the first version of) the strategy; the major concerns of which were with creating a new and unified education system, not based on race. Atmore (1993: 3-5) describes it as an attempt to find short and medium-term solutions to manage the most urgent educational problems in South Africa at the time; and to list its major concerns. The most radical departures from previous policy were that future education should not be segregated according to race, and should provide equal opportunities for all; and also that the new system should promote national unity – another departure from the Apartheid conception of South Africa as encompassing many "nations" pursuing "separate development". Additionally, the various systems would be amalgamated under a central education authority, but by establishing regional education departments; the two levels of control would divide functions so that the central authority took responsibility for policy, while other functions fell under the regional departments. Responsibility for education would therefore be shared between these two levels, but also devolved further so that parent communities and teachers had more control over schools. This last provision resulted, eventually, in the establishment of SGBs throughout the system, though the first real changes took place in the white schools (see above).

However, the newly-unbanned major political parties, most notably the ANC, wanted more radical reforms than the old regime was willing to institute, so that extensive negotiations

around post-apartheid education (among other systems) were carried out throughout the early 1990s. In addition to education itself, the question of language policy had a major effect on post-apartheid education, and so this is also discussed where necessary.

Although the first major policy changes began in 1990, it is necessary to go back further, to understand their historical roots and those of other related developments. These roots differ according to which side of the political fence they originated from. For the black majority political movements, the final pre-democracy struggle for equal and adequate education began with the 1976 Soweto uprising against the imposition of Afrikaans instruction, and throughout this period, language issues in education particularly had come to dominate debates among political activists (de Klerk, 2002). By the mid 1980s, a broad front of various organisations had set up the National Education Crisis Committee in order to campaign for People's Education. According to Harley and Wedekind (2004), although the NECC was a great mobilising force, there was very little substantial discussion of the curricular changes that would be needed to replace the dominant apartheid curriculum. However, they also see this movement as the first to make explicit the link between the concepts of democracy in society, and democracy in education, a theme which persists in education policy to this day.

Following the unbanning of the ANC and other liberation movements in 1990, then, a more intensive effort was needed in order to formulate policy 'alternatives' and potential new curricular material for the post-apartheid state. The National Education Policy Initiative (NEPI) was the NECC's response to this need: a massive research project into the suitability of various possibilities for future education policy, to be used by the ANC after the elections. The principles on which the policy alternatives for the new curriculum, in line with the ANC's position, were to be based, were 'non-racism, non-sexism, democracy, equality and redress' (Harley and Wedekind 2004: 196).

In the same period, the ANC also began for the first time to pay explicit attention to language issues, including language in education; de Klerk (2002: 36) claims that 'up until the early 1990s, language strategists inside and outside the ANC still conceived of English as a link language and language of national unity.' However, due in large part to pressure from the Afrikaner Nationalists not to allow English to gain higher status than Afrikaans (until this point, the two languages had shared official status), the eventual language policy, and new Constitution, would give equal official status to 11 languages (that English nevertheless



retains its prominence in the eyes of the general South African public as ‘the language of education’ is briefly explained in the introduction). In early 1992, the ANC language commission released a statement that no language would be declared official; it was not until the release of the NEPI Language Report later the same year that a shift in this policy became apparent. In the education system, the NEPI report advocated a policy of additive bilingualism, rather than a transition from Home Language to English; and the official policy of societal multilingualism began to be shaped (de Klerk, 2002).

In this period directly preceding the 1994 elections, the new Constitution and various other frameworks for policy in the new South Africa were hotly debated between various political parties, notably the ANC and the NP. In the meantime, South African society had begun to change, at least on the surface, as public spaces and previously race-based neighbourhoods began to desegregate. In terms of administration, at the local government level, racially segregated municipal authorities merged.

In educational terms, the ERS advocated the same merger between the racially segregated schooling systems, although the earliest changes were mostly structural/administrative, rather than curricular (Brook, 1996); and had almost no effect on schools outside the white system (for effects on this system, see above sections). The most notable of ERS and subsequent reforms - apart from the abolition of racial segregation itself, of course - and the most in contrast with the previous system, was the decentralisation of control over education. The eventual settlement that led to the new decentralised system was negotiated largely between the NP and the ANC, and aspects of it reflect the compromises that were necessary in order to reach an agreement. Decentralisation, however, seems to have been in the interests of both parties; the NP because it allowed them to preserve white educational privilege, and the ANC because it followed their fundamental democratic principle of handing power over to the people, in direct contrast (in the education system as elsewhere) with the rigidly centralised apartheid system. The NEPI language report, in fact, recommended the encouragement of local participation in the governance of schools; while under the ERS, in the (ex-)white schools the establishment of SGBs was a fundamental part of the process of conversion from purely state-run schools, to, by 1993, largely model C schools (Grant Lewis and Motala, 2004; see previous section).

While the early changes involved the amalgamation of the multiple education departments that existed under apartheid into a single system, making education now officially the responsibility of a single entity, with regional education departments responsible for local governance, this responsibility took a very different form from the control exercised by the previous departments. Under the new system, with education now under the control of the National Department of Education, each individual school would have a council made up from the parent body, which would exercise more control over many of the school's policies than the teachers.

After the elections of April 1994, which brought the ANC officially to power, the Government of National Unity (GNU) was formed; and it announced that the next five years would be a 'transition period'. The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the then-strategy for the development of the new South Africa, unsurprisingly - considering the system's history - made education an absolute priority, and the earliest post-election changes involved ironing out differences in curricula across the previously segregated school systems. The second stage of curricular change involved a general purge from the curriculum of all content that represented apartheid propaganda (see section 2.1.4 above on Bantu education).

In early 1995, all schools were officially declared 'open' to all races (Brook, 1996), although many had already quietly begun operating on this principle. Also in that year, the White Paper on Education and Training was released, as the first policy statement to argue officially for SGBs throughout the system, although they were already established in the (former) white schools. The period between 1995 and 1996 saw extended debate and multiple redrafting of the South African Schools Act (SASA); but it was eventually made law in 1996, and SGBs were officially established. That same year, the National Education Policy Act was released, decentralising financial control over education. In 1998 this was followed by the New Norms and Standards for School Funding Act (NNSSF), which was designed to address inequalities between schools, reallocating funding based on rankings by need, and allowing fee exemptions for poor parents.

In the meantime, the process of curriculum reform continued, and 1996 also saw a shift in focus from the content of the curriculum to the means of assessment, and hence the introduction of 'continuous assessment' in schools. The eventual outcome of this curricular reform process, launched in 1997 and implemented in grade 1 in 1998, was 'Curriculum

2005' (C2005), a still-controversial program, the first fully-C2005-educated generation of which left school in 2005 (Harley and Wedekind, 2004).

Although policy changes continue to occur, those described so far have been the most significant regarding the age group on which my research is based. For the former white schools which my informants attended, the most important policy changes in fact occurred before 1994, as laid down under the ERS; little has changed in the schools since then, and nor does it seem likely to do so soon.

However, a further point remains to be made regarding C2005 and its reception and effects in (former) model C schools versus the rest of the system. The curriculum itself has become, firstly, virtually synonymous with Outcomes Based Education (OBE); and it is designed to create an 'integrated knowledge system', by abandoning the concept of school subjects and replacing them with eight 'learning areas'. The third main feature of C2005 is its focus on 'learner-centred pedagogy' rather than on teaching *per se*. All in all, it is a complete departure from the rigid apartheid education curricula in any system; and it is both this and the fact that it arose independently of the NEPI research that lead Harley and Wedekind (2004: 197-199) to argue that 'C2005 emerged as a *political and not a pedagogical project* [emphasis in original]'. Thus its preference for political symbolism rather than actual educational theories is frequently criticised by educational theorists.

Its main drawback, however, is even more fundamental than this, in that its implementation was rushed and inadequate, so that teachers throughout the system found themselves implementing not merely a new curriculum, but a new vision of what education was expected to accomplish, and of what their own roles as teachers were, without any clear idea of how this new system was expected to work. For a full discussion of the complexities and failures of implementation of C2005, see Harley and Wedekind (2004); the crucial point here is that the (ex) model C schools remain at an advantage, since the "new" aspects of the new curriculum were far less foreign to them than they are to teachers in the disadvantaged schools. As the authors point out, many aspects of the new curriculum, for example its 'learner-centredness' and policy of continuous assessment, were already established in many former white schools. The 'learner-centred' policy of pacing lessons in terms of learner progress, as interpreted in model C schools, seems to result in 'strong differentiating pacing', where learners are encouraged to arrive at outcomes in their own individualised ways; while

in ex-DET schools, it is interpreted by waiting for all learners to catch up (Hoadley, 2002, in Harley and Wedekind, 2004). Continuous assessment, too, was already in place in schools previously run by the Natal Education Department, and their entire pedagogical philosophy was similar to that now espoused by C2005. While the implementation of C2005 was inadequate across the board in terms of teacher re-training, in the former white system, continuities with their previous practices meant that the new curriculum was far more comprehensible to teachers. In fact, the Department of Education's own C2005 Review concluded that the ex-model C schools were finding the introduction of C2005 far less problematic than other sections of the system (Harley and Wedekind, 2004).

The contribution of model C and some private schools to class-based stratification in South African society has already been mentioned. Harley and Wedekind, however, link this explicitly with the introduction of C2005: it is not merely the high fees and better-qualified teachers that separate model C schools from the rest, but their ability to implement the new curriculum as intended. Thus, the irony lies in the fact that the new curriculum, for all its political motivations for achieving educational, and hence social, equality for all South Africans, in fact merely reproduces (if not strengthens) the divisions it was intended to heal.

## **Chapter 3: The speakers, their attitudes and opinions, self-reports on language use, and descriptions of school and life experiences**

### **3. Interview data**

I turn now to a description of the students of the schools and learners themselves, from my own interviewees. Each informant was interviewed for between 30 minutes and an hour or more (dependent largely on their willingness to talk), on topics ranging from their early school experiences to their plans for the future. The interviews were unstructured and open-ended, with the only consistently asked questions those necessary to gain basic information – ‘home language,’<sup>15</sup> education history, age of first exposure to English, etc. However, over the course of the interview process, a number of themes relevant to the speakers’ attitudes towards education, ‘race’ and language emerged, and I then introduced these into subsequent interviews.

The 44 speakers themselves were initially located by the ‘friend of a friend’ method; but when this did not produce enough interviewees, posters were placed around UCT campus asking for people willing to be interviewed for a small fee, who were ‘black’,<sup>16</sup> ‘18-25’, and had attended a former model C or a private school. They were therefore all UCT students in 2007, with one exception who was taking a break from her degree, but came along with a friend who was still on campus (F29). The majority are female (34 speakers); only 10 male speakers were willing to be interviewed. All were told that I was researching the use of English in South Africa, without any detail being given as to what I was interested in (although the posters themselves had already indicated the type of speaker I was looking for). They were asked to read the word list<sup>17</sup> which comprises my primary linguistic data before the interview<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> The terminology surrounding the issue of language dominance – first language, home language, mother tongue – is revealing; see 3.2 below.

<sup>16</sup> The use of explicit ‘race’ terminology is interesting in itself as a demonstration of how entrenched it still is in South African society; the posters were written and distributed by a research assistant who is himself ‘black’, and had no hesitation in using the word. Additionally, only one of those who responded questioned its use; two ‘mixed race’ informants merely asked if they would make suitable interviewees because they were ‘biracial’ (F11) or ‘half black and half white’ (M6).

<sup>17</sup> See chapter 4 on motivations for using word list (WL) data; interview data for the GOOSE vowel is also used.

<sup>18</sup> Although it is more common interview practice to reserve such formal linguistic tasks for the end of the interview, I felt that, since much of the interview would be concerned with issues of language and accent, asking interviewees to read the WL after such a discussion would make the task even more self-conscious than is usual. I therefore decided to use it in the beginning to avoid this situation.

### **3.1 Ethnolinguistic identity: Home Language, First Language or Mother Tongue?**

In terms of ‘home language’, the variety is fairly wide, if uneven, but not all of the official African languages<sup>19</sup> are represented among the speakers:

Xhosa (F23, F25, F26, F27, F28, F29, F1, F2, F1, F3, M3, M4, M5, M10)

Zulu (F33, F34, F6, F8, F12, F13, F15, F17, F20, M8, M7, M2)

Pedi (F4)

Swati (F18)

Sotho (F32, F9, F10, F14, M9)

Tswana (F24, F7, F19, F21, F22)

Seven speakers (F30, F31, F5, F11, F16, F19, and M6) identified only English as their ‘home language’; because this is important in itself, it is discussed separately below.

The above list is not intended to suggest that the speakers who identify an African language as their ‘first language’ or ‘home language’ use only that language at home and with family, nor that it is their sole or even dominant ‘first’ language: in many cases, speakers identify English as one of their primary languages (in terms of the amount of time they actually spend speaking it) as much as, or more than, their ‘mother tongue’, which seems to be used sometimes to indicate, literally, the language of their mothers or family. In asking what their ‘first/home/etc language’ was, I myself was inconsistent in the terminology I used; at times whichever term I used was accepted, but occasionally it was corrected, with an explanation:

I: *What’s your first language?*<sup>20</sup>

M9: *Um my home language is Sotho, and I’ve been speaking English since I was five as well.*

In this case, the speaker goes on to explain, later in the interview, that since starting school he has used English far more regularly than Sotho, even at home (see below).

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<sup>19</sup> South Africa has 11 official languages: English, Afrikaans and 9 Bantu languages.

<sup>20</sup> All transcriptions have been punctuated according to standard orthography for ease of reading; underscore indicates emphasis.

Thus most of the speakers are aware of the ambiguities surrounding the terminology, and many are quick to include English as one of the languages they command fluently; or even, on reflection or otherwise, as the language they are most fluent in. Not many, however, are willing to name English explicitly as a ‘home language’, regardless of the frequency of its use in the home environment: the term in many cases seems to refer to a more emotional/‘ancestral’ connection than English can be said to command. For example, while F28 freely claims English as a language used at home as much as Xhosa, the term ‘home language’ is sidestepped:

I: *And home language?*

F28: *I speak Xhosa and English at home, like it’s, ja it’s a bit of both.*

As an example, however, of how question-phrasing might influence the form of answer, F24, who was interviewed very early on in the process, was asked about language in the following way, and responded:

I: *Oh and then tell me, have you – you must’ve spoken English since you were born, yeah-?*

F24: *-yeah-*

I: *And any other languages?*

F24: *Ja I speak Tswana. At home ja. Mostly to my parents, and extended family but English and Tswana were – are – my home languages.*

The naming of English as a ‘home language’ in this case is probably not entirely due to the phrasing of the question, since F24’s upbringing has been more strongly intertwined with the (white) English–L1 community than most; so to draw too strong a conclusion from this is unwise. However, the point remains that by not introducing the apparently loaded phrase ‘home language’, and asking about English first, it is possible that a different sort of answer might result.

More complex in terms of linguistic identity are those who recognise an ‘ethnic’ identity unrelated to the actual language spoken; F33, for example, grew up in Johannesburg, and so her chronologically ‘first’ language was Zulu; however, the family retains an ethnic identity as Xhosa: *‘I mean we’re Xhosa but we all speak Zulu.’* F8 similarly separates language and ethnicity when asked about her ‘home language’: *‘I’m Ndebele but I’m Zulu-speaking’*. In this case the issue is further clouded by the information that F8’s mother is in fact ‘ethnically’ Swati; she nonetheless identifies herself as Ndebele via her father. However, the separation

between language and ethnicity is not clear-cut: in discussing her avoidance of speaking Tswana, F33 indirectly refers to herself as ‘Zulu’: *‘I try not to [speak Tswana] because [...] if someone is Zulu and they’re speaking Tswana you can hear the accent and it sounds a bit funny.’* In discussing language usage, an identity as a ‘speaker of X’ is sometimes more salient than ethnicity.

In cases where the speaker has moved during their childhood from one language-dominant area to another, it can become more complicated in terms of defining a ‘predominant language’, but the use of ‘home language’ is still reserved for the language of one’s parents’ ‘ethnic’ grouping, even where the majority language is more fluent, or where English is in fact their ‘most fluent’ language. For example, F19 was born in Soweto, Johannesburg, but moved to Zulu-dominated KwaZulu Natal (KZN) at the age of eight; and her answers to questions regarding home language are as follows:

I: *And what’s your home language?*

F19: *Um, it’s, seTswana*

I: *And d’ you speak Zulu as well?*

F19: *Yes I can. And a bit of Xhosa since I’ve come here [to Cape Town]; I’m learning. Ja but I’m more fluent in English I’d say.*

F19 later makes it explicit that her professed ‘home language’, Tswana, is now actually her least frequently used language. At school, among her black friends, she initially spoke only English, since she hadn’t yet learned Zulu; once she had learned to speak it, ‘we’d mix’ English and Zulu. At home, the existence of a sibling born in KZN, and so not exposed to a Tswana-speaking community, changed the family language practice:

F19: *We now mix. But it’s mostly English coz like I have a baby sister, and she knows only a couple of words of seTswana and she knows mostly English.*

The continuing influence of linguistic environment is seen in the fact that F19’s coming to UCT and befriending some Tswana-speakers again has somewhat changed her language practices, in that, *‘I speak mainly Tswana to them because they’re like the hardcore Tswana from Pretoria.’* The ‘mainly’, however, is relative: asked if she ever does, or could, hold a conversation in ‘pure’ Tswana, she answered: *‘I’m probably a bit hazy. But then, it’s good [for me to have to speak it]’* – the clear implication being that ‘home language’ maintenance is important, but she isn’t entirely comfortable speaking it without mixing (not unusual in itself; see below). Apart from this group, however, the majority of her friends, although



black, are not Tswana-speakers, and so they generally use English with her and among themselves.

F3, uniquely, conflates her ability to speak English with a semi-‘ethnic’ identity, in saying that:

F3: *Originally I’m Xhosa speaking, but it’s not that good [laughs] [...] And if I were to go to a deep Xhosa place I wouldn’t be able to speak. But I think, honestly, in as much as I’m Xhosa, I am - I could say I’m more English.*

Here, then, her command of English – and her recognition of her apparently poor Xhosa skills – leads her to the conclusion that, if language confers ethnicity, she must ‘be’ English. This is in direct contrast to the rest of the speakers, who (as above) draw their ‘(ethno)-linguistic’ identity from an ethnically ‘ancestral’, family connection, regardless of language use. Her reasoning behind this is therefore at odds with the rest; she simply has a different viewpoint on what speaking English ‘means’ in terms of identity. But this is not, apparently, because her experience has been any different to theirs – her following comments are fairly typical:

F3: *[I could say I’m more English] because I spend a lot of time in speaking English. My friends, even though we’re all Xhosas we just, we can’t help it coz it’s so in our system. We just grew up in English, type of thing.*

Defining a single ‘home language’ per speaker, in the sense of the language that is regularly used at home with family, is therefore complex; still more complicated is the question of what to term their ‘African language’ (where one is spoken). ‘First language’ in the chronological sense is usually applicable, but comes with the general assumption that the ‘first language’ remains the most fluently and frequently spoken, which is often not the case. The speakers themselves seem to prefer ‘home language’, even where it is not literally true, and so I tentatively continue to use it, as ‘HL’, but with reservation.

### **3.1.1 Ethnicity and language ownership**

A final point relevant to the issue of ethnolinguistic identity is the use of the possessive in indicating language ‘ownership’. In the same way as ‘home language’ is not used literally, referring to a language as ‘my language’ or ‘our own home languages’ usually indicates an ethnic (or simply racial, in the case of those such as F33 and F8) identity rather than an actual

command of the language: whether referring to themselves or to others, statements claiming language ‘ownership’ as being ethnically defined are not uncommon:

F6: *[Some of my friends] don’t speak Zulu as well as they speak English [...] but they are Zulu and [...] their parents are Zulu and everyone [...] and, you know, they have problems with Zulu as if it’s not their language.*

F15 exemplifies the type of speaker F6 describes; apparently as a result of her schooling she had stopped speaking Zulu entirely by the age of 7. Although she managed to reacquire it later, her English is far more fluent. However, the notion of ownership of the language remains, if wistfully:

F15: *[needing to switch into English is] embarrassing for me because I’m – this is my language, you know?*

F33 makes a similar point, even though the language in question is not the one she associates with her ethnicity, in saying ‘*I feel bad that I can barely speak my own language.*’

The idea that ethnicity or race ought to dictate language use,<sup>21</sup> and that it confers language ownership, therefore remains strong, even where the speakers recognise that they themselves are counter-examples to the perception. F27 makes explicit the notion that it is the attendees of ‘white schools’ who have this problem, but with the obvious implication that they are not the norm, since in broader South African society, ethnicity does usually determine language:

F27: *A lot of black people can’t speak their own language properly, if they go to a private school, or whatever, model C school.*<sup>22</sup>

Thus it is clear that issues of identity and language ownership are somewhat complex; and that although people frequently refer to ‘my/their/our language’, what is meant by this is not always consistent. In most cases, language ‘ownership’ is seen to stem from an ‘ethnic’ identity, regardless of actual proficiency in the language; whereas a few speakers, such as F24 and F3, are willing to acknowledge ownership of English despite the lack of this ‘ethnic’ or ‘ancestral’ connection. In many cases, the speakers seem ambiguous about their own linguistic identities, an ambiguity which can be seen as overlapping with – but not, I would argue, mirroring – an ambiguity about their social and/or ethnic/racial identities.

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<sup>21</sup> With the obvious exception of F3; and partially, F24.

<sup>22</sup> See F14’s comment below on how everyone she knows is just ‘model C’ anyway.

### **3.2 The English L1 speakers**

As mentioned above, 7 speakers do not have or refer to an African HL. Although media reports (see Chapter 1) suggest that the ‘loss’ of African languages in black middle-class youth is common as a result of a shift towards English, this number in a sample of 44 is not particularly high, and six of the speakers are atypical in that they simply had no exposure to an African language in the home, rather than rejecting one. The two ‘half black and half white’ speakers, M6 and F11, each have a white foreign parent – M6’s mother is Welsh, and F11’s Polish – and their black South African fathers did not speak an African language at home. In M6’s case, this was because his ‘ethnically’ Tswana father had moved to England, where he later met his Welsh mother, as a child, and himself had shifted to English monolingualism; F11 sees her inability to speak Sotho – her father’s L1 – as a result of a deliberate choice by her parents:

F11: *I think, the thing is, it was more of a conscious decision on my parents’ part more than anything else because [...] I know my dad’s in a sense kind of sacrificed the Sotho language because my mom sacrificed Poland.*

Her L1 is in fact Polish, but they speak English at home most of the time; with the Sotho-speaking side of the family she and her siblings also speak English, and apparently the family do not resent her father’s choice. F21 calls Tswana her HL, but because she lived in Namibia until the age of 9, she only learned to speak it ‘properly’ when the family moved back to South Africa. Her parents only spoke English to the children, which did cause her problems among black South Africans on her return, and continues to do so – this is discussed below (see 3.6). F5 and F31, although raised in South Africa, have parents from, respectively, Uganda and Malawi; although each report that they have some basic ability in their parents’ L1s, their primary language has always been English.

F16 was born in the USA, but moved to South Africa aged two. Her parents, although South African, are of different ethnicities – a Zulu father and a Tswana mother – but she speaks neither language very fluently; and feels attached to no particular ethnic identity: ‘*I don’t know what I am [laughs] I’m lost.*’ Her parents appear to have made a deliberate choice to bring her up English-speaking:

F16: *I was brought up speaking – to speak English.*

Her elder sister was apparently a fluent Tswana speaker before the move to the USA; but by her return she'd '*just lost it.*' Thus it seems that the move out of South Africa prompted her parents to switch to raising their children in English.

It is in fact only F30 who truly conforms to the media stereotype of a 'coconut' black South African who, although raised in South Africa by multilingual parents, only ever acquired English:

F30: *I grew up speaking English; it was like the first language that I learned, even before I could speak any African languages.*

Her 'ethnic' identity is not mentioned; she appears to prefer the racial identity of being simply 'black'. Her parents and extended family are largely Sotho-speaking, although her parents apparently also speak Zulu, Xhosa, Tswana, Pedi, Venda and Afrikaans, and possibly more. Despite this, she only learned Sotho from domestic workers, who she needed to communicate with while her parents were at work, and speaks it very little. With her extended family too, she speaks English, although '*when the whole family congregates*', they speak '*Pedi or Sotho or whatever*' and '*so you sort of pick it up.*' However, when addressing F30 or her siblings directly, they speak English:

F30: *Even like my grandparents, they speak like Sotho to my other cousins and stuff, but like me my sister my brother they speak English to us.*

As will be shown below, this is particularly unusual; and demonstrates a family acceptance of language shift in this particular branch, which is certainly not present in most cases.

Although she was brought up speaking only English, she sees her 'Englishness' as being reinforced by her schooling:

F30: *I stood out amongst the black people [laughing] and like gelled with the white people [...] like in terms of I couldn't really speak African languages much, so I'd speak English all the time [...] and I used to have that white accent, kind of thing. So even when I did speak Sotho I didn't speak it like with an African accent I spoke it – ja - with a white accent [...] I'd feel like more comfortable around white people coz I used to feel like not pressurised to speak African languages. Coz every time I was amongst black people I used to get shy, coz I'd feel like, if someone started speaking an African language to me I'd be like oh my gosh [laughs]. So I used to like always pray like please don't [laughs] please speak English please speak English ... and I'd get all quiet coz like I don't know what I'm supposed to say [laughs].*

Thus the fact of her not speaking an African language fluently isolated her from other black people, which in turn led to an increasing reinforcement of her interactions with white English speakers. The same is also true for the other black English L1 speakers, who found that their inability to command an African language often resulted in suspicion or dislike from black classmates, and they consequently had more white friends than black while at school. The ‘mixed race’ speakers, however, did not appear to have the same sort of problem; apparently it is only people perceived as ‘entirely’ black who are expected to speak an African language.

Of course, most, if not all, of the speakers interviewed have experienced this type of prejudice to some degree or other, in that their confidence and fluency in speaking English, and the amount of English they use, are perceived by many as signs of assimilation into the white community and rejection of the black; F30 is merely an extreme example. This issue is obviously wider than the mere use of a variety of English; and is more fully discussed in section 3.7 below, on ‘Coconuts’.

### **3.3 Domains of language use**

Among those who do speak an African language, many of the speakers acknowledge that they no longer speak their HLs as well, or as often, as they now speak English. In most cases, they are aware that this is due to their schooling in a thoroughly English environment;<sup>23</sup> and several mention the fact that their schools encouraged them, via their parents, to speak more English:

M9: *Because I couldn’t speak English [...] my teachers told my parents that um, that I was having trouble with speaking English. When we got home, we’d just speak English and speak English until I was fluent at it.*

Similarly, M7’s parents were told to speak more English to him at home, and he comments that ‘*I think that somehow has made me what I am right now.*’

As mentioned above, in a fairly extreme example, F15 had, by the age of 7, lost her ability to speak Zulu entirely, a development which her mother blamed entirely on her school:

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<sup>23</sup> In fact, many speakers mention the fact that at school, particularly primary school, they were forbidden to use their HLs.

F15: *That's when my mom actually decided to take me out of that private school, and she thought maybe there is something completely wrong with that. And then she took me to another model C school, and then I think things got a little better; I started speaking a little more of my language but I lost a lot of it as the years progressed. And as my English became better, my Zulu suffered more.*

Thus F15, although atypical in her total loss of her original L1, represents a theme that is very common throughout the interviews; with a few significant exceptions (see below), most of the speakers report that their use of and ability in their HL declined as they became, via their schools, more integrated into the monolingual English-speaking community.

It is useful to examine the domains in which English has come to dominate, both in order to understand the speakers' language practices, and to determine the extent to which they have become predominantly 'English speakers'. As mentioned above, F30 speaks English, and is spoken to in English by, her extended family and grandparents; but this is very unusual – as F30 herself clearly recognises. In those speakers who do speak an African language, conversation with older family members is almost always more in HL than English; and this increases with generational hierarchy: a hypothetical scenario would be a Zulu HL speaker who speaks Zulu to his grandparents, mixes Zulu and English with his parents, and speaks mostly English with his siblings and friends. Of course, the picture is never this clear cut; there are significant exceptions, and particular circumstances (see below) affect the likelihood of a particular language being spoken in a particular domain. Self-reports on language use are, of course, not entirely reliable, and speakers occasionally contradict themselves, but from the overall consistency of the data it seems that they are generally fairly aware of their own language practices.

Because the interviews were unstructured, I did not ask everyone exactly the same questions; therefore there is some data missing in terms of domains of use. However, with relation to grandparents, it is clear that this generation is seen as the repository of the HL. F4, like F15, gradually lost her ability to speak Pedi from the time she started pre-school (aged 3); when her mother addressed her in Pedi she would reply in English, until eventually her mother too spoke English to her. Her grandparents, however, were the motivation for her reacquisition of Pedi:

F4: *When I visit my grandparents they'd all speak it but by then I was like huh? What are you saying? [laughs] I have no clue what you're saying; so then I was like ok clearly. So I just relearnt it again.*

This reacquisition occurred at the age of 5 or 6, so unlike F15 she was, in her judgement, able to return to full competence; at home she now speaks a mixture of English and Pedi, depending on the topic.

M7 similarly has a grandmother who enforces the use of Zulu when he speaks to her; although he never stopped speaking his 'home language' as did F15 and F4, his mother nonetheless continues to have fears that he might, and his grandmother provides the solution:

M7: *I think my parents try very hard, especially my mother. She forces me to go to my grandmother's house and my grandmother doesn't – she's fairly fluent in English but she'll refuse you to speak English.*

M9 also mentions that he tries to speak Sotho and Zulu to his old friends when he goes home to Johannesburg, 'coz I don't wanna get back to my grandmother and then she's like [...] 'Huh. You can't speak Sotho'.'

There are, of course, exceptions: F2's mother lives in the rural Eastern Cape, but she was sent to be raised in Johannesburg by her grandmother, because of the superior schools there. When she returns to the Eastern Cape every year, she 'struggles' with speaking Xhosa; although she does speak it at home in Johannesburg with her grandmother, she says this is just 'the basics [...] to communicate.' Here, it is her rural mother who has retained the language, while her urban grandmother seems unwilling to improve her competence:

F2: *I have asked my granny to teach me but then she's like, no, na na na. And she's just – she doesn't wanna teach me. She tells me stories and then she laughs at me coz I can't speak Xhosa properly.*

In terms of language use with their parents, there are again exceptions, but many of those who do speak an African language as HL in fact speak a mixture of this language and English. While this may not have always been the case, a mixed lect often becomes the norm after the children have, via their schooling, become habituated to speaking English. For example, M1 spoke no English until he entered a private school at the age of 8; but having acquired it, his language practices within the family changed:

M1: *With my parents it's like [...] fifty-fifty*

I: *So you switch?*

M1: *Ja I switch and change and, yeah, it becomes like a concoction, it's in Zulu and English.*

In some cases, as with M9 (see above), this seems to have been a result of the school's intervention; but in other cases it seems to have happened naturally. Usually, as a result of generational differences in language usage, it is the language used with one's peers that changes first, and then spills over into language use with parents. However, some speakers are highly aware of some of the meanings of using English with their parents; F25 sees it as a matter of respect:

F25 *You find that I speak more English with my siblings than I would with my parents. Like I speak Xhosa more with my parents; it's sort of almost more respectful.*

She goes on to add laughingly that this is also a useful tactic '*especially when you're in trouble*', presumably as a result of the respectful implications of the language choice; but many other speakers similarly mention switching into or out of their HL as an important conversational tool. F14 is particularly eloquent on the topic; here I do not give the full quote, because it raises many other issues as well as this one; these will be taken up again below. On the issue of respect and language, however, she explains:

F14: *When I listen to some of my friends, when they speak in English [they swear and] they're just so liberal about what they say [...but] the phone rings and it's their mom – they switch to an African language – and then their tone is softer, and there's a sense of, there's a respect thing going on and [...] they will not even dare to swear [...] They hang up, switch to English [snaps fingers] and all of the manners are gone [...] when my parents speak to me and I speak to them in my language I'm far much more [hesitation] controlled and you know, I speak with such respect.*

However, she does use both languages with her parents; and recognises that she uses English when the conversation is '*casual*' and '*relaxed*', while speaking Sotho '*forces me to change my register and my tone and my approach.*' As above, this showing of respect by means of language choice applies even more rigorously with grandparents than it does with parents, so that respect for one's grandparents is usually shown by avoiding English use altogether.

To illustrate the spread of English throughout these domains, M1 spoke only English at school (as part of school policy), and this then spilled over into his language use out of school, even with his Zulu-speaking friends: he would still speak Zulu with them out of school at first,



M1: *But then after a while you know, like I think I'd be speaking like a good percentage like maybe sixty seventy percent English, rather than Zulu [with friends].*

Or, in the words of F22, she 'took [English] outside' of school, because she was so used to having to speak only English in school. F17 is a slightly different case in that she was a boarder, and so seldom physically out of school, but even with other Zulu-speaking friends in the boarding hostel, 'what we do find is that you spend so much of the day speaking in English that even when you speak to each other you tend to kind of speak in English as well'.

There are a multitude of such comments, describing the way in which speaking English all day at school eventually - or sometimes very quickly - led to its extension into a language used outside of school, and then in the home. Even where this transition period remains as a clear memory, many speakers still find it difficult to believe that they were ever actually unable to speak English, now that it has become so thoroughly a part of their lives. F29 and F30 share a house and were interviewed together; while F30 (see above) is one of the few L1 English speakers, F29 only learned English when she transferred to a 'white' English-speaking primary school, and had to repeat the first year. However, immediately after having explained this, she goes on:

F29: *We [F30 and I] have these conversations at home, like [laughing] there was a time I couldn't speak English!*

Many others make similar remarks, even if they seem not to have fully realised that such a period existed until they were asked when they first spoke English:

F32: *Then [speaking English] just came sort of naturally, coz by grade – by grade - what is it? Standard 2. God. By Standard 2? I actually was not even aware that there was a point in my life that I didn't know how to speak English.*

Similarly, F17, asked the same question, was not consciously aware that she had not spoken English all her life; and she has no memory even of learning it: asked if she spoke any English before school, she replied:

F17: *It's so early in my life that I started speaking English that I can't really remember [...] but I mean I couldn't I couldn't have because at home [...] my parents spoke in Zulu and [...] the neighbourhood I grew up in was fully Zulu.*

English therefore in many cases has become so familiar and comfortable that, even where speakers do recall finding it foreign and incomprehensible, they cannot actually conceive of themselves as not having spoken it.

As usual there are exceptions, and significant ones; it seems that not only ethnic background, but also the type of neighbourhood in which one grew up, might influence the extent to which the English language has infiltrated one's interactions, especially with family. Although it is impossible to make statistically reliable generalisations from this amount of data, there are nonetheless indications of possible patterns. The 10 speakers who report using no English, or almost none, in interactions with their parents are F1, F16, F18, F34, F1, M2, M3, M4, M8, and M10. The proportion is fairly low, but not insignificant; not all black attendees of former white schools automatically introduce English into family conversation. Of these ten, 5 are Xhosa-speaking, 4 Zulu, and 1 Swati. Of course, it is true that the majority of speakers in the full sample are Nguni-speakers, and Xhosa and Zulu predominate; but it is perhaps worth remarking that it is only Nguni-language speakers who report that they do not mix languages with their parents. Additionally, the fact that there are more males in this group than females may indicate a gendered pattern in who 'takes English home'. However, M8 has two sisters, one in pre-primary school and one older than him who attended the same school, but says that they don't use English at home either:

M8: *My house is like a traditional Zulu household where you speak Zulu, and there's not much exposure to English.*

It may be simply coincidence that it is mostly males who report not using English with their parents; but it nevertheless seems worthy of mention.

A third factor potentially affecting the likelihood of 'taking English home' is where that home is: whether in a 'black' or 'white' neighbourhood. Although the Apartheid Group Areas Act, which determined where each 'race' could live, is no longer in place, very little has, in practice, changed: the majority of black South Africans continue to live in 'townships', with the exception of elements of the new 'black middle class' who have moved into the 'white suburbs'. This topic is more fully examined below, because of its effects on identity and experience; here, however, the importance of neighbourhood lies in its potential effect on language mixing: speakers whose HL is spoken around them in the neighbourhood, while English is not, may have less incentive to mix the two at home than speakers living in English-dominated suburbs. Indeed, of the 'non-mixers' at home, 6 grew up in 'black' townships, 2 in small towns or rural areas, and 1 in Xhosa-dominated Mthatha. Of course, there are many township-raised speakers among the 'mixers' too, but it is nonetheless potentially significant that all of the non-mixers are likely to have grown up in areas where their HL was the most common one heard around them.

Although I have called them ‘non-mixers’, this refers only to mixing languages when speaking to their parents: all of them do use some English when speaking to siblings and particularly to friends. M8, when away from his ‘*traditional Zulu household*’, mixed Zulu and English with his Zulu-speaking friends at school, and now, at UCT, thinks that his conversation with other Zulu speakers is ‘*percentage wise, seventy percent [...] English and then thirty percent is your own home language.*’ He does comment, however, that:

M8: *We know we’re not constrained to speaking English [...] so sometimes we just throw in some vernacular [...] if I have like a lot of white friends I’m restricting myself coz then I can’t like speak my own home language. Although with my other friends we still speak English, it’s like the comfort of knowing OK, if I feel like speaking like in Zulu, I can.*

This comment is the only one of its kind, although F18, despite now being ‘*used to speaking English more than speaking Swati*’, also mentions the pleasure and relief of speaking Swati to her family over the phone.

M8’s attitude is clearly very different to that of the ‘mixers’, many of whom in fact admit to feeling much more comfortable speaking English than their HLs, and express doubt about their ability to conduct an entire conversation without resorting to English. The acquisition of English, for some speakers, is associated directly with a loss of ability in their home language, as with F15 (above). F33 introduces the idea of language mixing in terms of its effect on her ability to speak Zulu. Asked if she still uses Zulu with her family, she replied:

F33: *I do but very bad Zulu because I mix it a lot. Ja and I noticed that with like a lot of people, who are like [the] same as me. Even on TV they’ll speak Zulu but just pepper it with English words.*

It is of course possible that in many cases, what the speakers are referring to is simply the fact that urban varieties of many Bantu languages have borrowed extensively from English, as well as undergone other common language change processes; there are plenty of comments on their inability to speak the ‘*deep [i.e. rural]*’ or ‘*real*’ version of ‘their’ languages. However, in some cases it is clear that speakers feel as incompetent in their HL around other speakers of urban varieties as they do around rural speakers. F33 herself, despite her unease at the fact that ‘*a black person on the street*’ will usually approach her in English, when she thinks that ‘*they should speak to me in Zulu, because I’m black*’, is actually equally (or more) uncomfortable when she has to speak Zulu:

F33: *If I'm like on a taxi<sup>24</sup> or if I'm anywhere and I need to speak to this person in Zulu I feel very uncomfortable coz I'm very conscious of the way I sound when I speak Zulu. [Kids on TV sound like they're foreigners trying to speak Zulu]; it doesn't sound like their language at all even if they are Zulu, so I'm very like conscious of the fact that I might sound the same.*

F33 was placed in a 'white' English-speaking school at the age of four, and now speaks English or an English-Zulu mixture even with her grandparents (see above); it is therefore not too surprising that she should have these difficulties. It is, however, fairly clear that it is a genuine problem of language competence, rather than a feeling that her 'urban Zulu' is inferior to rural varieties.

In other cases it is not so clear; F2 says that she can speak (though not as a HL) 'Joburg Zulu', and contrasts it directly with her friend F17's variety:

F2: *She's from Durban so she speaks the deep hardcore Zulu which I don't understand [...] Joburg Zulu's very – you know you just know the basics to communicate.*

Since this is remarkably similar to her comments on her 'home language' (Xhosa) competence (see above), it suggests that her ability to converse with her urban grandmother, and her 'struggle' to understand Xhosa in the rural Eastern Cape, may not, after all, be due to her only knowing 'the basics', but rather to a dialect difference – one where the rural variety is seen as the 'deep', genuine version of the language, while the urban is corrupt.<sup>25</sup>

It is therefore not always easy to establish, from the speakers' own reports, even something as apparently simple as whether or not they believe they have a full command of their HL. However, the common theme that remains, whether or not we can fully trust their own judgements of competence, is the gradual takeover of English, from their language use in the classroom, into broader areas of their lives; and often to the detriment of their HL competence.

<sup>24</sup> Minibus taxis in South Africa are a very common means of public transport; and presumably because of the close confinement of passengers, many of the speakers mention them as sites of exposure to 'other black people', whose reactions towards them are often described as fairly hostile.

<sup>25</sup> If this is the case, then her grandmother must command both varieties, while still regarding the rural lect as 'proper Xhosa'.

### **3.4 Age of exposure to WSAE and its effects**

The speakers' stories of their acquisition of English vary, usually according to the age at which they were first exposed to the language – as above, some have spoken English for so long that they cannot remember acquiring it. However, in most cases, their initial exposure to English was at school. This experience is remembered as more or less distressing, depending again on the age at which they were first placed in a 'white' English-speaking environment. Those whose exposure to English occurred at home or in pre-school (M4, M5, M6, M7, M8, M9; F2, F4, F8, F9, F10, F13, F16, F17, F19, F20, F21, F23, F24, F26, F27, F22, F31, F23, F1) usually do not remember it; though there are exceptions: for example, M9 was transferred from a township pre-primary school to a 'white' suburban one, and remembers that

M9: *[Learning English] was tough initially, coz like I didn't speak a word of – well, I'm not sure if I didn't speak a word, but my English was nowhere near the other kids', and as kids will do, I got teased.*

However, he apparently acquired it rapidly, and by the time he entered primary school (aged 5), 'was speaking fluent English, like the other kids.'

As an aside, it is also interesting to note that in a few cases where English was learnt at home (or, on a school's instructions, extensively practised at home), an almost literal distinction seems to exist between 'mother tongue' and English, in that some speakers report that while they more frequently spoke their HL with their mothers, their fathers encouraged English. F33 is again a case in point; her situation is slightly complicated by the fact that her parents separated when she was an infant, and she only met her father, who had been studying out of the country, aged 3. Her father's return meant her entry into the pre-primary of a 'white' private school aged 4, but this was not his only effect on her language usage:

F33: *For as long as I can remember I've only spoken English with [my dad] [...] I hate that but I feel very uncomfortable speaking to him in anything other than English.*

Thus here, 'home language' and 'mother tongue' refer to the language used (at least partially) at home with her mother and aunts, while with her father she speaks only English. In a less extreme example, F32 mentions that she had a 'very basic understanding' of English before moving to a 'white' school, because her father – but not her mother – 'would always try to speak English here and there, just – I suppose for exposure's sake.'

To return to the effects of age on acquisition, for those who learnt English only in primary school, their memories of being placed in an entirely English-speaking environment are

usually more detailed than those of the pre-school learners, and they recall more difficulties, but the majority still end on the same note of positivity as M9 (above): they are thoroughly confident in their current ability, and recall attaining it swiftly. F6, who transferred to an English-speaking school relatively late, in grade 2 (aged 7 or 8), recalls it as difficult because, in grade 1 (in a ‘black’ school), although *we tried to speak English [...] it was like this dream that I wish I spoke English*’, she had really had little exposure to it apart from television. However, ‘*because you are a child and you’re young [...] it sort of grows into you*’.

Not everyone remembers their acquisition of English as being quite as simple as this; but it is only F18 who recalls serious difficulties; and this is presumably because she learned English relatively late - only in grade five<sup>26</sup> (thus aged about 11). At this stage she was transferred to an English-speaking school, and vividly recalls the experience:

F18: *It was scary. It was very scary. My first few days there I didn’t speak to anybody [...] everybody was just speaking so fast for me [...] this whole new language and stuff. So I kept to myself a lot. And then um I started making friends and I started interacting more [...] but it wasn’t nice. I didn’t enjoy it. I felt completely isolated.*

She ends the narrative on the familiar semi-positive ending (‘*over the years I got used to it and started liking it*’), but F18 is not the norm in the sample, and her more maturely-recalled experience perhaps clarifies what the early days were actually like for some of the others. They, however, often cannot really, as above, believe that they ever truly did not understand what people were saying in English.

One final point regarding the acquisition of English is the frequency with which television is mentioned as a teacher. As above, F6’s only contact with an L1 variety before her school change was TV; although she says that she and her friends used to try to learn English from it, they were not very successful. Others, however, tell a different story: M8 says explicitly that, although his schooling was English-medium, as a child ‘*my main teacher in the English language was TV [...] coz I watched a lot of TV growing up, so that really helped in helping out my vocabulary and everything*.’ Several other speakers also mention TV as a source of exposure to English, though none as explicitly as M8.

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<sup>26</sup> F18 is older than the others - aged 23 at the time of interview; she transferred to a ‘white’ school in 1994, as did many of the younger speakers, but was of course older at the time.

Most speakers - quite naturally in the circumstances - conflate their narrative of English-acquisition with that of their first exposure to a very different, 'white' environment, which makes this a natural place to turn to the speakers' descriptions of their school lives; although their attitudes to their languages, and to the world in general, remain relevant and will continue to be discussed.

### **3.5 Assimilating into 'white culture'**

For most of the speakers, entry into the (former) white schooling system meant their introduction into an almost entirely 'white' environment, where black pupils were a definite minority, and black teachers unknown. However, as briefly mentioned in Chapter 2, a few former Model C schools have become mostly black in terms of the student body, although the teachers usually remain white; and M8 attended one of these throughout his school career. Christie (1990) predicted that a proportion of 35% black students would alter the ethos of former white schools, and prevent the simple assimilation of black students into white middle-class culture, by forcing the schools to adapt and acknowledge the change in their student bodies; however, in the school M8 attended, this does not seem to have occurred. Despite the fact that the majority of students were black, nothing seems to have altered about the school. As he explains it,

M8: *There's definitely a lot of [racial] politics there, so I didn't enjoy my stay [...] It was a school run by an Afrikaans group, and most of the students were black, but [the] majority of the decisions that were made benefited the white group – the white minority.*

M8's school experience is very different from that of most of the speakers, the majority of whom found themselves in a racial minority from a very early age. In terms of their relationship with, and attitude to, their white classmates, the age at which they were enrolled in a 'white school', and the proportion of black students in the school, have strong effects, although as ever there are exceptional cases. Most of those who were placed in white schools very young, report no racial tension, or even awareness, in their early school years – much as they recall no serious difficulties in acquiring English. The predominant theme in answering questions about the experience of finding oneself in a minority at schools, is, to paraphrase, that 'kids don't see colour', or else that it was 'normal for me'. F12 entered a small, private Catholic school in grade 1, where she was the only black student for most of primary school; but asked if she found this strange at all, replied:

F12: *Not really, coz it's all I knew [...] it didn't really feel strange coz I guess I'd been there from grade one; I didn't really come in the middle, so it kind of felt normal [...] I had white friends simply coz that was the whole school that was white.*

As this suggests, the speakers are usually aware of the difference in perception between black students who have 'always' attended white schools, and those who make the transfer at a later stage. M3, who himself only moved to a white school in grade 3, and remembers it as being difficult in linguistic terms, nevertheless believes that he and the only other black student there from such an age were '*the lucky ones*', because they had already become part of a '*clique*' of friends, while black pupils arriving later were unable to break into the cliques (and presumably formed their own). For similar reasons, most speakers who started at white schools young, report having racially mixed friendship groups in primary school, while those who started later sometimes do not.

Thus F17, who attended a '*predominantly white*' primary school, had no difficulties on moving to a racially similar high school,

F17 *because I'd come from a primary school where I'd been one of very few black children anyway. But those girls that had come from schools where there were more black faces than white then struggled a bit in the beginning.*

Despite this, and the fact that her friends remained '*mostly white [...] just because of the numbers ratio*', F17 raises a point which reappears in many of the speakers' stories: simply because of being a '*minority group*', she and the other 10 black girls in her boarding school did '*tend to kind of form friendships just because you understand each other culturally and so on.*' Although she does not connect this explicitly with her age at the time, this tendency to discover more in common with others of the same 'race' is mentioned by almost all the speakers as occurring at some point; and as with F17, it is usually in early high school. Why this should be the stage at which 'race' and/or culture becomes important is unclear, but many speakers describe it in terms of '*finding themselves*' (e.g. F32; see below). Others, such as F9, see it merely as a matter of having different '*interests*' and '*backgrounds*':

F9: *I guess people just sat with people they [...] have like cultural backgrounds with [...] It would be weird like at break, coz like we talk about Generations, but then they talk about Grey's Anatomy.<sup>27</sup>*

F17 sees this split as a natural part of growing up, while also echoing F9 on the matter of different interests:

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<sup>27</sup> *Generations* is a South African soap opera; while *Grey's Anatomy* is an American series.



F17: *I think as we get older you kind of develop a stronger personality tending towards your cultural background [...] whereas when we're younger you kind of find interest in the same things.*

In several cases, the split between race groups in high school is seen as inevitable; as something to be noted, but not questioned or explained:

F20: *Primary school was very multicultural, as in my best friend was a white girl [...] Everybody, everybody just mixed [...] Only when we got to high school, things changed [...] It was always a segregation thing going on over there; it was like the black people this side and the white people this side [...] Not that we were – had any beef or anything, it was just a natural split or whatever [...] It just happens.*

This narrative is not unusual; and this sort of 'voluntary segregation' seems to be very common. In a few cases, the speakers report that their schools made attempts to correct it, and were more or less successful, but only on the surface: outside of the classroom or 'team building' exercises, the separation remained.

As an example of perhaps a typical 'race relations' scenario in later high school, and probably one of the most astutely observed, F14 replied to a question about 'mixing' in her high school as follows:

F14: *Here's the funny thing [laughs]. On the surface we did, so, you would walk past the matric lawn or the general lawn or whatever, and you'd see that we're all sitting together, and you know we're all trying our best to mix. However, generally we tended to group ourselves based on languages that we speak or interests. So for instance I'd be having a conversation with a black friend of mine, and then we'd break into what they call vernac<sup>28</sup> [laughs]. So we'd break into African languages, and you know somehow that'd make the other people who don't understand them feel excluded, so they drift away and go join a group that they can. Basically, it didn't happen on purpose, but there was a drift, because of cultural issues more than racial issues and racial tension [...] There was no black white, you know. And the only reason why there were cliques was because of interests.*

Again, it is emphasised that the separation is due to 'interests', but here the issue of language is also raised – although F14 later states firmly that English is part of her generation's (of any race) repertoire and identity, this comment does seem to hark back to M8's (above), about the

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<sup>28</sup> 'Vernac' (short for vernacular) is the colloquial term for one's African HL.

importance of having the option to use ‘vernac’, whether or not one actually takes advantage of it.

### **3.6 The ‘coconut’ or ‘Model C’ label**

F14’s description of the underlying realities of apparently ‘integrated’ high schools is supported by those speakers who state matter-of-factly that they had many white ‘*acquaintances*’ at school, but did not consider them friends; or others who state that they had white friends but were not as close to them as to their black friends. This is not, of course, the case for all speakers; and it is here that the notion of ‘coconuts’ raises its head again. It is not only language use that leads to someone being classified a coconut; but the inability (real or apparent) to speak an African language is a highly salient trait, and usually attracts the charge. Thus F14, after the above quote, goes on:

F14: *I mean look you got your black girls who didn’t know how to speak any African languages. They labelled them coconuts.*

I: *Were there a lot of them?*

F14: *There were; it’s funny, because in grade 8 and 9 there were a lot of them but as we grew up [...] the whole coconut thing fell away. And it’s funny because then they moved from hanging out with all the white girls, to coming to group themselves with the black girls. I don’t know if it’s an identity thing, that they felt that they don’t really know who they are unless they associate with black people - which is absolute rubbish but [laughs] it could possibly be an explanation. Maybe they felt like I don’t know, they were drifting or whatever.*

This is the same issue about ‘finding oneself’ that seems to motivate the ‘race split’ in early high school, but with the difference that it refers not to the initial split, but to those who resisted it at first, and later apparently changed their minds. This does not seem to be uncommon – a few speakers mention that the ‘coconuts’ (or they themselves) only became friends with other black students late in high school: F12 (quoted above), for instance, had only white friends in primary school since she was the only black pupil; but this didn’t change even after more black students enrolled in the school:

F12: *In high school there were a lot more black kids; I still kind of stuck to like my white friends and that kind of thing [...] It was kind of very late in high school and then varsity where I really, kind of, made friends with like the black kids and stuff.*

The situation of the two ‘mixed race’ informants, after the ‘race split’ in their schools, is also interesting; in one sense, one might assume that they could ‘choose’ their racial identification, in terms of which friendship groups they joined. F11 initially says that in primary school, she ‘*hung out with the coloured girls*’;<sup>29</sup> but in discussing her own ‘racial identity’ later in the interview, she explains what happened as she grew older:

F11: *Sometimes people laugh because I always just say like I’m not black I’m not white I’m biracial, coz I’m not coloured, you know? So I prefer to leave that like kind of open, rather than classify myself as either/or. Ja coz I don’t think that’s me anyway.*

I: *I’m just wondering like when people in school go off into their race groups –*

F11: *Ja [...] I know like a couple of people who are also biracial or whatever, that really also don’t relate to that coloured community or whatever, you know, and so you wouldn’t really wanna class yourself as either/or. That’s kind of selling out one parent [laughs] so essentially you’re just, kind of floating; going where the wind takes you.*

M6’s experience seems to have been similar, in that he never identified himself with a specific race-group; instead, he had groups of white friends, and groups of coloured friends, but the members of each ‘race’ group never mixed.

For the ‘black’ speakers and their own ‘racial’ identities, it is here important to return to the idea of ‘coconuts’, and to describe exactly what is meant by the term; and to highlight the fact that, although in large tracts of South African society, *all* these speakers would be regarded as coconuts simply because of their schooling history, within the schools themselves a different interpretation of necessary ‘coconut qualifications’ exists.

As an initial definition, F19 explains the origins of the term:

F19: *What it basically means is that you’re black outside but then inside you’re white. And you present yourself as white people are.*

This is, of course, too simplistic a definition to encompass the complex ways in which the term is understood and used in everyday language, although it is the everyday definition. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, almost all of the speakers have no hesitation in self-identifying as black (inside or out). However, this acceptance of racial terminology obscures more subtle questions of the meanings of ‘blackness’, as interpreted by the speakers themselves, and by what they sometimes refer to as ‘most black people’ or ‘other black

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<sup>29</sup>‘Coloured’ being one of the Apartheid-defined race groups, generally of mixed ancestry

people'. The very existence of the term 'coconut', too, obscures many of the actual complexities of the ways in which the speakers negotiate their 'racial' identities in day to day life, including the ways in which they judge themselves and others according to membership of the category 'coconut'.

This category of 'coconut' is of course a shifting one, where degrees of 'coconutness' are viewed differently according to where on a hypothetical continuum of 'closeness to white culture' the person categorising stands. Thus the question of who or what is a coconut is a relative one. Many admit to being seen as coconuts by others, but generally deny the charge, while they are willing to point to others who are 'more coconutty' than themselves as examples of what a 'real' coconut is.<sup>30</sup> Thus F1 explains of her township neighbours:

F1     *People assume that we're snobbish [...] By going to like previously model C schools they assume that we think we're better than them. They give us names like coconuts [laughing] I mean I'm not even a coconut. I would name someone else a coconut who I really think is a coconut but I wouldn't name myself a coconut.*

They are generally aware, then, of the relative nature of the judgement; being in a socially ambiguous position themselves, they are well aware of the arbitrariness or ignorance with which such labels are applied. Nevertheless, this does not prevent them from applying the label.

Before discussing their attitudes to the term, it is useful to examine the types of behaviour that lead to a perception that one is a coconut. The term being relative, the behaviours or characteristics associated with 'coconutness' also depend on who is doing the judging, but some core themes remain. Since 'coconutness' is perceived as akin to 'whiteness', naturally any attitude or activity associated with whiteness (and/or middle-classness; until this generation, the distinction was almost meaningless) leaves one open to the 'Coconut Accusation'. As previous quotes have indicated, the inability to speak an African language is top on the list of 'obvious coconut' indicators; and this can also apply where an African language is spoken, but not the right one: F4 is a Pedi speaker from Johannesburg, who is unable to speak Zulu. As she explains,

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<sup>30</sup> As raised in Chapter 1, Ndumiso Ngcobo (2008) satirically discusses this phenomenon, and describes various 'levels' of coconut types, while pointing out that from the perspective of a previous generation, even the most down-to-earth, 'solidly African' black person of today would appear to be '*a flaming coconut*' (he uses now-President Jacob Zuma as an example), thanks to the increasing Westernization of South African society.

F4: *I can't speak Zulu which is terrible because everyone speaks Zulu [in Johannesburg] and usually, if you went to a house you'd all speak Zulu with the parents; ja parents and housecleaners.*

I: *But if you can't, you have to speak English?*

F4: *Ja you just have to say, 'Hi'. Which means a lot of them hate me.*

Worse, she can actually understand Zulu when addressed, but can only respond to the speaker in English - which apparently leads many people to the conclusion that she is deliberately refusing to use Zulu. Although the term 'coconut' isn't mentioned, it is clear that the reason people 'hate' her is her apparent refusal to speak an African language. Of course, had she been raised in a Johannesburg township, she would very likely have been able to speak Zulu too; so the problem here is still related to her 'white' suburban upbringing; but nonetheless she is not necessarily as much of a 'coconut' as she appears to Zulu-speakers.

Speakers who have moved to a different province, with a different majority language, experience similar problems; as do those whose parents are not South African, and who therefore have had no childhood exposure to a South African language (excluding, as mentioned previously, those who are 'mixed race'). F19, as a Tswana speaker in Kwazulu Natal, initially had more white friends than black precisely because of her inability to speak Zulu, and feels that it was because of the latter rather than the former that people called her a coconut:

F19: *I think like because when they said something to me in Zulu and I'd answer in English, because my Zulu isn't that great, so they'd be like oh ok no, she's a coconut [...] it wasn't necessarily because I hung out with the white girls.*

As with the English-monolingual F30, then, her linguistic abilities determined her friendships at school.

Even those who have successfully maintained their HL are not clear of the 'coconut' charge; merely being able to speak English well is also frowned upon. As F10, although equally (or more) fluent and comfortable in Sotho, explains, 'black people' are uncomfortable with her English fluency; and asked if they show this explicitly, replied:

F10: *Yes. They do. I think it's in the way - I don't know, it's in the way you say things and in the way you think. And in the way you pronounce certain English words; that makes you just different, you know, and people find that strange. And, I think, threatening. They find it a threat that you can speak English like a white*

*person. So, I don't know, they think, I think they think you think you're better than them [...] because you can speak English.*

Thus people are generally highly aware of the implications of speaking English too often or too well, as F6's father's injunction to her and her siblings indicates:

F6: *My dad always like told us as kids that when we're with other people we shouldn't speak English coz English it's taken as if you're making yourself look better; as if you think you're better than other people. So when you're like out like at church or when you're with other people, then you won't speak English; you'll try hard even if it's hard now to like speak Zulu all the time, but you just have to speak Zulu.*

'Englishness', then, is apparently akin in the greater public mind to snobbishness and hence 'coconutness'; as F6 goes on to say, speaking it is seen as 'boasting', because (in her opinion) 'black people [...] consider white people better so now if you can speak the white language it's like, wow.' Unlike F6, F10's non-coconut status is not improved even by speaking Sotho to her extended family, however; her educational and social background is too clearly perceived, and she thinks that 'for them speaking [Sotho] to me is like speaking to a white person who just happens to be able to speak your language.'

There is, of course, resistance to this notion of English fluency as snobbery and 'coconutness' among the speakers themselves; there are even, in the public realm, popular Facebook groups dedicated to the topic (see also Chapter 1), where groups named, for example, 'Just because I speak english well, It don't mean I'm a coconut!!' clearly state the members' opposition to the label and its connotations. Similarly, many of the speakers resent the fact that their education and its consequent effect on language usage results in their being seen as 'less black' than people without their advantages; and they resent that their English fluency leads others to assume that they have 'lost' their home languages. F3 explains that the other inhabitants of the YMCA hostel she was living in told her that, when she first moved in, they assumed she was a 'cheese girl' or 'Model C girl' (close synonyms for 'coconut'), presumably because her accent and other characteristics betrayed her education, and the news distressed her:

F3: *I'm like no, oh I hate that. Because I think the stigma attached to it it's not – it's not really nice because, when you call a cheese girl, it automatically [...] implies you're stuck up, you think you're better than everybody, you don't know how to chill with the [...] normal people; you know, you're up there, whatever. I'm like no people I'm so down to earth [...] I'm just an ordinary girl.*

F7, too, growing up in (township) Soweto, found that her neighbours treated her differently:

F7: *Normally like if you speak English a lot, and then they're like, 'Oh-oh I'm a model C' [in mock-BSAE accent], you know what I mean? And so then it's - I can speak my own language, you know what I mean, but then it's like, it just so happens that one normally has a tendency of switching more to English because you've been so surrounded by it.*

This tendency, and the speakers' explanations for it, are further discussed below. Its implications - to people lacking the accent or the fluency - are, however, clear.

Excessive 'Englishness', of course, is not the only 'coconut' behaviour; and nor does not having a large number of white friends necessarily prevent the accusation. In South Africa, behaviours ranging from the type of sport one plays to the type of music one listens to all have 'race' connotations, and therefore playing a 'white sport' or listening to 'white music' are also potential 'coconut' activities. In terms of music, M5, as a member of his student residence's House Committee, discusses the difficulties of choosing the music for social occasions for the racially mixed student body:

M5: *It is hard to do, but yeah we do have time slots that we actually play, catering for different racial groups or cultural groups. Coz even, people who speak different languages have to – they tend to have different taste in music.*

He goes on to add that he himself, having 'lived in both worlds', listens to all types of music; in his case this is partly a reference to having attended high school in the USA; but comments of this sort are not unique.

Thus listening to any of the 'white' genres would seem to be an obvious 'coconut' characteristic, or at least a sign that one has had extensive contact with 'white' culture, which in most cases is the same thing. Again, the speakers are all aware of this; and F9 explicitly comments that she now listens to some 'white' music because of her schooling:

F9: *I listen to rock also; it's coz of [my school] [laughs]. Coz all the parties we went to they would play rock and then you started liking it.*

However, most of the speakers do stick to 'black' music genres such as RnB, gospel and hip-hop; or, if they listen to any 'white' music at all, continue to listen to 'black' music too. F9 also comments that although she generally prefers jazz and 'old-school' music (as her father's influence), she now also listens to (typically 'black') house and hip-hop '*basically from my basketball side*'. Thus she acknowledges that she has been influenced both by typical 'white' and typical 'black' taste – since basketball is generally a 'black' sport.

Although there are no explicit comments from the speakers linking music taste to ‘coconutness’, it is nevertheless important to bear in mind that speakers who enjoy ‘white’ music may have different attitudes to or experiences of whiteness from those who do not.

Interestingly, many of the speakers comment that it is racially-defined taste in music which determines the phenomenon that, even among people who do have mixed-race friendship networks, it is rare to find a racially-mixed group in a nightclub, since each club represents a distinct – and racialised – musical genre. F35 describes the situation most clearly:

F35: *Our fun as black students is different to their fun. Like they’d go to [X] which is like this rave club or something, and you didn’t enjoy going to [X] coz it’s a rave club, you think rave music, rock, all that kind of stupid music. But they(’d) also find our music stupid [...] We couldn’t do things together maybe the only thing we could do together is go and watch a movie [...] We find their fun boring and they found our fun boring.*

Sport, as suggested by F9’s comment above, is another activity which is heavily racialised, both in schools and in wider South African society; and here the speakers are more explicit in linking participation in various sports to ‘coconutness’ or at least ‘whiteness’ - although the direction of causality is not always consistent. For example, F23 mentions a black school friend who was ‘a swimmer’ - an activity usually confined to ‘white’ people; but whether this is an effect or a cause of her friendship group is unclear. Having explained that ‘cliques’ in her school were ‘mainly divided by race’ (again, ‘not in a mean, like malicious way; we were just sticking to those we find familiar’), she goes on to describe an anomaly:

F23: *I have a friend who was the only black one in her crew of white friends [...] I think at first maybe she had problems [...] But she was [smiles] she was a swimmer; and she hardly found black swimmers - so you know everything of hers was just twisted. But, she was generally a well-liked person; it wasn’t a problem.*

Problem or not, the girl was nonetheless recognised and remembered for her peculiarities in terms of sport and friends. And from the above quote, it is unclear whether, according to her fellow students, she swam because she had white friends, or made white friends because she swam. Similarly, F19 comments on herself that, although she was in the English-speaking class of her dual-medium high school, she had friends in the Afrikaans class ‘because I played tennis as well, and I did swimming; and then most Afrikaans kids were in those areas as well so I made friends with them.’ Although this is not a purely black-white contrast, it



does again suggest the chicken-and-egg relationship between sport and race-friendships: since F19 (see above) was also labelled a coconut by black classmates for her inability to speak Zulu, she may have taken up white sports along with her white English-speaking friends, and thus met members of the Afrikaans class; or, regardless of linguistic considerations, merely chosen these sports at random and found herself among still more white students.

Asked if people thought the swimmer in her school was a coconut; F23 says:

F23: *Ja no, obviously. But more in early high school; later on people didn't care really, because, [...] the more you grow the less cliquey you are. By the end of high school there were still cliques, but you could mix; you could chat to anyone so it didn't matter.*

M7 is even more explicit in linking sports to coconutness, in that he bypasses the issue of 'white' sports entirely, and rather calls them 'coconut' sports:

M7: *The sports things are also kind of big [...] because the people who are 'coconuts' would play squash and this, and those who are 'black'<sup>31</sup> will play soccer and basketball.'*

Since sport in South Africa is racialised, enjoying specific sports would therefore seem to point to one's race-attitudes and friendships – but there is no simple correlation here either. F20, to take one example, played supposedly 'white' sports (tennis and hockey) at school, but had no white friends; and so no easy 'sport = peer group' correlation exists. Nonetheless, the general tendency is that since individual sports are recognised as 'belonging' to one race, anyone playing an 'other-race' sport is identified as (at least slightly) odd. M5, discussing his language use at school, ties in sport and race to language, so that:

M5: *It also depends like, if we [were] playing soccer on the field or something, you know, then you'd be speaking Xhosa [...] But then if we would be - if we were playing cricket for instance, then everyone would be speaking English [because] cricket was played by mainly the white guys, and soccer was mainly played by the black guys.*

He himself played both, and had both black and white friends at school; he does not, however, seem to have been called a coconut at any point, even though in his school (as in most), racially mixed friendship groups - and sports teams - were unusual. M3, too, played

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<sup>31</sup> This forms part of a discussion on what 'being black' means to the majority of South Africans, hence his satirical distinction between 'coconuts' and 'blacks'.

sport across racial lines, but also recognises sports in general in terms of race, while raising again the issue of directionality:

M3: *[People] tend to be friends with the people that they play sports with, you know. So like all the soccer boys, which are predominantly black, and all the rugby boys [who] were predominantly white, would stick together.*

But echoing the above comments about the inevitability - and amicability - of the general race split, he adds: *'I think it was a natural thing rather than a problem. It was just, that's how things happened.'*

M3, however, later in the interview provides an interestingly ambivalent combination of comments when it comes to sport and race at his school. He remained in the same 'white school' from early primary until the end of high school; but the school itself changed somewhat. In high school, more black students appeared, but sport did not in M3's mind then seem to be 'racialised': rather, some sports were treated with 'favouritism' by the school administrators, without reference to race. Having been in the school from a young age, the difference in his attitude compared to that of black students who joined the school later is revealing; and harks back more strongly to the notion of 'assimilation' of black students into 'white-school' culture than any so far:

M3: *The way I was treated it was all fair [...] but obviously you got some other people that complained about how they were unfairly treated and stuff like that, you know. It was mainly people that came in later, and it's also, there was a lot of favouritism [...] more towards the rugby sides and the hockey sides and the netball sides, you know and it just so happened again that they were predominantly white so one could easily say you know it was because of that, because of this, you know.*

However, despite this apparent acceptance of the neutrality of the school's preferences, he also at a different point in the interview admitted that there might be racial prejudice involved:

M3: *Sports-wise [...] most white people played rugby - in fact the whole rugby teams were white and the hockey teams. And they sort of got the focus; I remember one time we [the soccer team] tried organizing a sports tour to PE, and the principal said he's not co-funding that and we can't run fund-raisers on school grounds to support that tour because he doesn't believe sport should be a part of the curriculum [...] and it just so happened that more than half in fact most of the soccer team was black [...] I think uh [the high school] was more actually racist than the primary school.*

He therefore shows considerable ambivalence between loyalty to his school, and recognition of possible prejudice among the staff. Whether or not boys' schools are more prone to this problem than girls', M8 too recalls that, although he played rugby for most of his school career, he eventually gave it up because, after a vicious and (from his point of view) one-sided fight between himself and a white rugby player, the school refused to discipline the white boy.

In terms of sport, F20, to take one example, played supposedly 'white' sports (tennis and hockey) at school, but had no white friends; and so no easy 'sport = peer group' correlation exists. Nonetheless, the general tendency is that since individual sports and types of music are recognised as 'belonging' to one race, anyone playing an 'other-race' sport or listening to 'other race' music is identified as (at least slightly) odd. These are therefore clearly yet more sites of racial tension and stereotyping, and can lead, for black students, to a perception that one is a coconut.

### **3.6.1 'Coconut' (or its variations) as offensive**

Aside from simply defining coconut characteristics, it is important to consider just how meaningful or insulting the accusation of being a 'coconut' is, to these speakers. The answers vary widely, however, and generally depend on where the speakers have lived and what they have been exposed to. Gender, too, seems to play a role, in that the male speakers seem less inclined to use the term, with reference to themselves or others. An exception is M7, who (as above) freely discusses the notion, and the response of 'other' black people to an apparent coconut:

M7: *Within the 'black community' there've become like social clusters of coconuts [...] and I tend to fall [laughs] under the category of coconuts because [...] some people say I have an accent - but I've never really picked up the accent thing - they say I have an accent and ja so you're just, somehow, put to a side [...] and if you want to talk about something about being black and they're like, 'What do you know, you're not even black'.*

Despite the self-deprecating laugh, he does see the term as a fairly serious insult to identity: he goes on to add an anecdote in which people in his university residence referred to another resident as '*the coconut one*', and he immediately recognised who they were talking about - but '*felt so guilty afterwards*'. M7 is strongly ideologically opposed to the idea that black

people are expected to behave in certain ‘black’ ways in general<sup>32</sup>, hence his resentment of both ‘coconut’ and ‘black’ as labels - but even so, with regard to his younger sister’s hobbies of ballet and piano, he feels that this is taking ‘coconutness’ too far.

F12 has an older brother – as another male example - who might not use the same term, but is definitely aware of coconutness, and takes the attitude to it that M7 describes. He considers her and her sisters to be ‘*Model Cs*’, and refuses to speak English to them, because

F12: *as he grew older [...] he seems to think that we think we’re white, or that we’re losing our values or whatever.*

F12 attributes this hostility to the fact that her brother does not live in a white ‘suburb’ with their parents, as she and her sisters do, but rather chose, when in grade 9, to live in the township with their grandmother – a point that will be taken up below. Here, however, it is interesting to note that she seems to feel no resentment to his attitude, and makes no attempt, either, to deny the accusation.

With reference to the term ‘Model C’ as a possible variant on ‘coconut’, it is interesting to note that one does not actually have to have attended an ex-model C school to be perceived as ‘a Model C’. As F14 describes it, when asked if her extended family attended the same type of schools as her,

F14: *My cousins and our generation is still very much labelled what they call Model C kids, because you see Model C, it’s lost its literal term, now it’s become something that people refer to as a form of being a - not a coconut but you’re a, you’re a Model C kid. So you know whether or not I go to a private school and my cousin goes to a government school doesn’t matter, because we’re still classified as Model C kids.*

Although she distinguishes Model C-ness from coconutness, the implication is that Model C-ness is at the very least a clear coconut characteristic; but that in those terms, attending a private school is no better or worse than an ex-white government school – a point suggested in the previous chapter, where attending a ‘white school’, in the eyes of the general public, is what attracts prestige, or else censure.

However, many other speakers, similarly to F12, do not seem to feel that being called a coconut is something to be worried about – unlike M7; or F3 above who wanted to be seen as ‘*an ordinary girl*’. F10, for example, mentions young black people who have ‘*forgotten how*

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<sup>32</sup> He is the only speaker who questioned the notion of ‘blackness’ as an identity; see below.

to speak their African languages’ – which, as above, is seen as the strongest coconut indicator - but asked how other black people react to them, replies:

F10 *I don’t think anyone really has a problem with it, you know. It’s strange - I can’t imagine not being able to speak an African language. I think that’s very weird, but I guess we have a choice now, you know, you can choose to speak English for the rest of your life. A strange choice, I think [...] but I don’t have a problem with it [...] I don’t think anyone really has a serious problem with it.*

F10, as previously suggested, is something of an anomaly in that she has maintained her HL very strongly, prefers speaking it to speaking English, and now deliberately makes Sotho-speaking friends for that purpose; while having had, outside her home, an entirely ‘white’ upbringing, living in a white suburb and attending white schools since infancy<sup>33</sup>. However, apart from her own strong language maintenance, she is typical of the type in her unawareness of the fact that, for most black South Africans, ‘losing’ one’s African language is seen as a very serious issue. What this implies, therefore, is related to what F12 suggested about her brother’s attitude: in white suburbia, black youth do not feel that seeming to be a coconut is a very bad thing; while in the townships, it is a much more serious accusation. F13 makes this clearer; asked how ‘serious’ it is to call someone a coconut, she replied ‘*I don’t think it’s serious [...] if you go to the townships then they get all aggro about it, but then [...] I don’t usually go there.*’ Similarly, F19 mentions that at school, no-one called her a coconut, but when she went into ‘*the outside world*’, people did. However, for those like F10, who have had little or no exposure to general ‘blackness’,<sup>34</sup> coconutness is a minor offence. In F10’s case, her isolation from the black majority has been so extreme that:

F10: *I remember in history when we learnt that there were more black people than white people in South Africa, I found that very strange. Because I don’t know in my life there’s always been more white people than black people. I guess it’s believable but, well [laughs] a bit strange.*

While this is an extreme example, F26, similarly, explains that ‘*I hardly ever come across people who don’t have the same background as me*’, when asked about relationships with, and reactions from, people without her (white) educational background.

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<sup>33</sup> As indicated in chapter 2, this is partly explained by her parents’ being ‘angry’ with white people and their insistence on English during her childhood; she notes that this has not, however, affected her younger siblings.

<sup>34</sup> Or what, in an article attacking coconuts on the Mail and Guardian Thoughtleader blog, Memela (<http://www.thoughtleader.co.za/sandilememela/2009/09/30/dear-coconuts-there-are-no-black-racists/>) - without explanation - refers to as ‘authentic blacks’.

### **3.7 Neighbourhoods: (black) township vs. (white) suburb**

As I suggested above (section 3.3), living in a township versus a suburb may have an effect on the likeliness of mixing one's home language with English in conversation with parents; however, it is also clear that it has many other potential effects. Most illuminating in explaining the differences between township and suburban life are those who have experienced both, such as M7. He states simply that *'I live in two parts of the world'* - partly with his township mother, and partly with his suburban father. However, he has attended 'white' suburban schools from the start of his education, and therefore is well-placed to describe township attitudes to this, as in his comment above on being treated as a coconut, and *'pushed to a side'* of 'black' discourse. The most common phrase used among the speakers to explain township people's attitudes to, especially, township youth educated in the suburbs is that *'they think we think we're better'* than them, as seen above. Thus the township-raised among the speakers are highly aware of the stigma of coconutness, which they have lived with for most of their lives. The public disapproval of this 'race betrayal' is a very common theme in their interviews, therefore, and they describe many ways in which it is shown.

The most commonly mentioned childhood cause of conflict between 'white-schooled' and 'black-schooled' township-dwellers, during their schooling, is homework: with very few exceptions, the township-raised among my 'white-schooled' speakers raise this as the first issue to cause problems between themselves and their childhood friends. All of them have had difficulties - as the exception, and/or the 'coconut' - in their neighbourhood; and many describe the trouble they had in maintaining local friendships, often ascribing this directly to the amount of time they had to spend at school or doing homework. F18, for instance, describes the homework problem as a direct lead-in to accusations of 'making oneself better':

F18: *When you go to a school in town, when you come back from school you don't [...] sit at the street corner and play and whatever; you've always got homework. You've always got things to do and - so there'd be that little thingy that you know they have against us saying, you know, we think we're better than them, you know. We sit at home the whole time; we never come out the house.*

She claims that *'it was never intense'*, but she did not have any close friends in her neighbourhood - apart from one other girl who went to *'an Indian school'*, and this *'wasn't that big a gap'* from her own 'white' school, so they had more in common. F1, more radically, deliberately chose to end her friendships in her township when she reached high school, in order to concentrate on schoolwork:

F1: *They were such a distraction that I just thought okay, let me just stay at home and not have friends [in the township][...] I used to come back from school, and my friends are already here - they wanna go play, or do things, and I'm like 'No guys, I have to work, I have to do school work'. And when I was saying those things now, then it would be like I'm making myself seem better than them; that 'Oh, you think you've got work, you've always got work blah blah blah, we don't have work blah blah blah'. So I was like okay fine. Let me just distance myself from them.*

Less deliberately but just as finally, M9 adds that the length of the school day in his private school further isolated him from his 'black-schooled' township neighbours; as did the fact that he played in school sports teams on the weekend – leaving him very little time at home. As time went by, therefore, it became inevitable that '*friendships [...] centred around school more and more*'.

F22 also describes the length of the school day, and the need to do homework after school, as the initial cause of her deteriorating relationships with township friends; but further adds that, although she could still see her friends on weekends, '*even then [...] after a while then like, the gap starts happening and then, then I began speaking more English; and then English - they don't really speak much English*'. She is one of the few to mention the emergence of English-use as a barrier, but it is likely that others had the same experience.

F28's experience is very different, in that she apparently managed to maintain township friendships despite people's reactions to her schooling.

F28: *They were a bit, 'Ooh, you go to a white school, you can't play with us'; and 'Speak English, let's hear you speak English' [...] but it wasn't anything hectic [...] We're still all friends; I still see them.*

Thus although she was recognised and treated as 'different', in this case she did not find herself isolated at home; and - very unusually - managed not to allow herself to feel so.

F29 provides further insight into the township versus suburb divide, but from a different perspective: she moved into a '*white area*' aged only 5, but later established friendships with black township dwellers in her school. She describes how, after the 'race split' (see above) occurred in primary school, her pattern of friendship changed, at least at school:

F29 *I didn't hang with the white girls as much as I did when I was younger; I hung out with the black girls. But then, I still had my friendships with the white girls, especially*

*coz I stayed in a white area. So [...] at school [...] I'd be with my black friends, and then at home, coz my black friends stayed in the township, most of them [...] I'd play with the white kids; so, it was very weird.*

However, with her black township friends, her relationship seems to have been similar to that of F28: there was no hostility, but she was nonetheless recognised as 'different':

F29: *If you stay [...] in a white area you're seen as the coconut [...] the relationship didn't change so much, but then they always thought I was this privileged coconut, ja because [...] I stayed in [the suburb] and they stayed in [the township]. I sort of felt like I was put on a pedestal, um because I didn't stay in a township.*

This 'pedestal' is described with different levels of discomfort by various speakers, but is nonetheless always present when in the company of township-dwellers, if one either attended a white school or lived in a white area - or both.

A major difference between township and suburban life is the level of interaction one has with the surrounding neighbourhood – hence the difficulties presented by having to stay indoors and do homework in the townships. M9 moved from a township to a suburb aged 14, and is therefore well placed to describe the difference:

M9: *It's a quieter neighbourhood, I mean it's not the same [...] in Soweto at any one time you'd have, like, kids knocking on the door saying you wanna come play outside, play a game of soccer on the street play a game of cricket on the street, race bikes round the block etcetera. Those sort of things, like, you wouldn't find in the suburbs.*

M9, in fact, admits freely to not having made a single neighbourhood friend in his seven years in his suburb; his friendships are all school-based. In linguistic terms, it is easy to see how living in a busy, highly interactive township aids HL (or community language, if different) maintenance, particularly if the speakers manage to maintain relationships with neighbours despite their 'coconutness'. Suburban life, on the other hand, is not only 'quieter', but distinctly lacks a sense of community, especially to those who have known township life. F15 says explicitly that although she grew up 'in the really nice suburbs, actually', she has always been aware that it 'isn't really a community, it's just everyone having their own, like, little pet house thing, and living their own lives.' Thus for those in the suburbs, too, friendships are made at school rather than at home, just as suburban-schooled township dwellers find that school determines their social networks regardless of their neighbourhood.



Comparing her own immediate family's and her aunt's experiences, F1 describes the advantages, and the community, of township life - even though she herself was the first to suggest that they moved to a suburb after her father's death, because she felt unsafe in the township without a man in the house:

F1: *In the townships, people - okay they're sort of like united; people help each other. If you don't have food you can easily go to your next door neighbours and like [...] 'The month is bad for me, I need groceries and stuff' - they'll borrow you money. If you don't have money to go to school, you go to your neighbour's house [...] so it's easier like that. Life is easier like that.*

The implication here is that the danger of crime is outweighed by the danger of isolation – although as it turned out, *'we haven't had any break-ins. Well, I guess they're afraid of my mother.'* Despite this loyalty to township life, however, the stigma of coconutness remains; due to the children's schools and the family's relative wealth, *'people assume that we're snobbish; they assume that we think we're better off than them. Even by going to, like, previously model C schools they assume that we think we're better than them. They give us names like coconuts'.*<sup>35</sup>

Attitudes to township versus suburban life, however, are very variable among those who have experience of both. M7, living in *'two parts of the world'* (as quoted above), admits to preferring his suburban father's house to his township mother's:

M7: *In my mother's house I don't really feel at home, because [...] I can't leave the house [...] I've never really been at home there. I was raised in that house, but because of the schools I went to, [they had a big part in] the being pushed to the side.*

Thus at his father's house, *'it's kind of more comfortable there'*, and he appreciates the luxuries of high-speed internet, a swimming pool and a tennis court. In the last 4 years of his parents' failing marriage they all lived there together, but the divorce meant that his mother and the children moved back to the township; since then he has always preferred his father's current neighbourhood despite his recognition of the *'ubuntu'* and neighbourliness of the township. He lists the facilities that townships lack in terms of entertainment, and despite feeling *'morally obliged'* to live with his mother, would prefer to be in his father's house.

M9, as above, also left a township for a suburb in his early teens; but unlike M7, he never had the opportunity or necessity to move back – and this seems to have made his attitude to

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<sup>35</sup> This quote directly precedes the one above where F1 claims that she isn't a coconut, while others are.

township life more nostalgic. He is, of course, aware of the nostalgia, but nonetheless he regrets the move:

M9: *[The suburb we live in now is] a nicer neighbourhood and all, but - I've always had this like, this romantic attachment to [...] the neighbourhood that you grew up in, and all of that.*

This attachment meant that he had adolescent dreams of going back:

M9: *I always used to have this high school thought that I'd go back and - like after high school, after varsity [...] even though I'd be earning an income that would allow me to stay [...] in the suburbs, I'd go and I'd live in Soweto, um, and that was just because, I suppose I felt that I'd missed out on a lot.*

M9 also comments that, because of moving to the suburbs, and because of the way that his private school took up all his time and energy, he had no time 'to go back [to the township] and meet friends, meet family'. Because of this, he feels that he has lost some of his 'black' identity:

M9: *I also do envy kids who didn't have to lose out on that cultural background [...] There are a lot of experiences in my life which are, you know which aren't entirely African. I mean, like as I say [my school] is a very like English school, and I - after we moved [to the suburbs] from Soweto [...] I don't know, I sort of lost out on African culture.*

He also recognises the 'positives' of his background, since he believes that black students unexposed to the language and culture of 'white' education are 'never given a fighting chance' when they start university. The sense of loss remains, nonetheless.

### **3.8 A foot in each world? Juggling identities**

M9 is unique in explicitly admitting that he feels he has 'missed out' on 'African-ness'. However, there are comments from some other speakers suggesting that they too worry about this. Several of them comment on the fact that they are aware of living in two worlds, a 'black' one and a 'white' one. F14 reports that in her school, it was the black students perceived as coconuts, who had 'lost' their home languages, who took Zulu as a subject:

F14: *I dunno if it was pressure from home, or if they felt like that's the only way they can prove their blackness, does that make sense? If everybody thinks I'm a coconut then I'll take Zulu to show that I'm not.*

This was also the point at which they stopped having white friends (see above), and F14 feels that this too was an attempt to reconnect with a 'black' identity. While this is less reliable even than a self-report, it is nevertheless revealing.

Others, of course, feel that they do not need to assert their blackness; they simply acknowledge that they have access to and recognition in two worlds. F17 explains that her black township-schooled friends and her '*white, coloured and Indian friends*' do not understand each other, but she, having lived in a township but attended 'white' schools, has '*gotten used to both sides.*' Thus although her rural family and township friends still marvel at, and partly resent, her exposure to 'white' culture, she accepts that she is the one in the middle who sees both sides:

F17: *It is that, 'Ooh', you know, like 'you hang out with white people, wow'. [...] There is that still very much in the country; but I mean if you're the one who's - and it is difficult for us as well trying to, um accommodate everyone in a sense. But I mean, ja you kind of do get used to it [...] you just kind of learn to juggle everything.*

M5 makes a similar statement, although in his case he is mostly contrasting his family and childhood in the rural Eastern Cape, and his adolescence in Washington DC, where his father is a diplomat:

M5: *There are two contrasts [...] I'm sort of like in the middle, you know. Looking on the left, there is um tradition, on the right, modernity so to say and like yeah, [you] balance the two.*

He also comments on the differences between traditional Xhosa cultural beliefs, and modern science, and how he had to learn to separate the two, and respect the former while believing in the latter. Thus his beliefs are '*situational*', and he will sometimes '*go along with*' people espousing traditional beliefs, but sometimes just '*tell them it's not true.*'

This duality of identity is most fully explored in a dialogue between F29 and F30, who were interviewed together. Discussing how they are no longer as immersed in 'whiteness' as they were at school, I asked how this has changed them; and this led to a brief exchange about their racial identities:

F30: *I think, the thing is, like as much as I saw like my white friends all the time like at school, and I was like a white person at school or whatever, I still was like rooted in the fact that I'm black coz like uh, my family and all that stuff. Like when I wasn't with my white friends I was with black people. So it didn't change me much, it just*

*made me, like, the white me, when I was around my white friends. And the black me at home.*

F29: *I wonder if white people have that? [laughter] Like, okay, white me at school, black me at home [laughter] You're like two different personalities.*

F30: *But they weren't so different coz, obviously at home, even when I was amongst like the blackest of the black people, I was still white. I was more white to them, you know; I wasn't as black as I could be.*

They go on to add that, naturally, they have been called coconuts '*everywhere*'; in F29's case, even by her sisters, who have never had white friends – and she suggests (like F30 above) that it was because she was seen as a coconut that she had '*only white friends*' until late high school.

Having a '*white me*' and a '*black me*' echoes M5's and F17's comments; but F30's remarks on not being '*as black as I could be*' are new. F10, too, comments on this - in her case, her parents' distrust of white English-speakers is an added complication:

F10: *You're like okay, maybe I shouldn't speak English, you know. It's having those kind of double standards I think in your life, made it uncomfortable to be with white people. And uncomfortable to be with black people because then you weren't quite black enough [...] I still tend to have better relationships with people who've had a white [finger quotation marks] like really western education than people who haven't.*

This sentiment has also been expressed in Maboyi (2008; see Chapter 1). It may explain why many of the speakers, even those who had only white friends at school, now (in university) have mostly or entirely black friends with a similar educational background: it is only with them that they feel truly comfortable, since they are the only people with truly comparable experiences.

M7, too, discusses race and identity; but in his case he wants to resist all racial categories,<sup>36</sup> and resents the fact that stereotypes of black people exist and that he is criticised for not adhering to them. As an often-criticised and self-confessed coconut, he is highly aware of what 'blackness' means in broader society, but he also recognises the shifting borders of blackness and coconutness:

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<sup>36</sup> As mentioned above, one interviewee questioned the use of race terminology on the recruitment poster; this was M7. However, as he wryly comments, he came anyway.

M7: *We're going through this change like what it really means to be black [...] if I would define being black twenty years from now for, like from now right now you can define being black as this and this and that. If I define it in like twenty years' time, twenty years before this time, it'd be different [...] the identity's changing in a weird way, and somehow, people have been dragged into it.*

While he recognises this, he is resentful of the ways in which blackness is currently defined, and how they apparently exclude him: in his university residence, he feels that *'I don't fall under the category of black any more'*. A friend of his believes that *'if you're black you have to have like these kind of black things, black tendencies as he called it. If you don't have black tendencies [...] you don't fall under the category of black'*. Aspects of this argument are scattered throughout the interview; among the comments are the following:

M7:

- *I eat cheesecake. I enjoy cheesecake and people like find cheesecake repulsive and disgusting. And they're like no [...] real black people don't eat cheesecake.*
- *You're not supposed to go against affirmative action, you're supposed to be for affirmative action, because it helps you. It does help but there are some critical - there are flaws in it.*
- *There's no like leeway, no. Because ja, being black means ja, you live in a township, you get married in the township.*
- *Black tendencies is, fashion, the whole - how you handle yourself, how you are [...] how you speak to people. Like I'm not supposed to be very outspoken [...] I'm not supposed to be this person I'm not supposed to be that person I'm not, I'm not supposed to come from this background I'm not supposed to support these people. I'm not supposed to be friends with certain people [...] Ja and some do some people do fall under the category of like, 'Ok I'm black, this - so this is what I am'. Being black means you're loud. Being black means you're late. [...] And I tend to like, divert from them.*

He states that township life generally dictates these *'tendencies'*, and that therefore, leaving the township, whether as a residence or a site of education, is the cause of all the trouble: *'as soon as you leave the townships and go to white schools people don't know how to deal with you.'* However, he is critical of the townships in that he sees all their inhabitants as accepting this narrow definition of blackness; he mentions a friend who told him that *'the children where I live do not have any dreams. They're all inspired to become kwaito stars.'* Thus he seems to embrace a broader or more hybrid attitude to life and identity; one where he chooses his role models and his lifestyle not based on race but on personal taste.

M7 is the only speaker who resists stereotypes this strongly or deliberately. However, F14 also mentions them, in a different context. She says that she and her black friends never talk about race, except to use *'that's so black'* as a joke whenever someone does something 'wrong':

F14: *It's funny, because when we talk about anything that has anything to do with race it's mainly, not putting ourselves as black people down, but you do something and they go ach, it's so black. [...] It's a matter of oh you're so embarrassing you're so black [laughs].*

She also mentions that with her white friends, she can make *'Is it because I'm black?'* jokes; and is glad that South African society has reached that point.<sup>37</sup> Asked what 'so black' means, she acknowledges that it conforms to negative stereotypes about black people, but that they use it in *'a very satirical way'*; as they do the converse:

F14: *I think it all boils down to um stereotypes, so this whole you know white people can't dance - which I still struggle with, I've seen some white dancers - or you know black people are loud and I've known some very quiet black people [laughs] - so you know if you do something loud, 'Oh that's so black;' if you can't move, then it, it goes to that whole 'Ooh, that - she's so white gosh'.*

### **3.8.1 Assimilating to white/school culture**

How these speakers reached this point of recognising, rejecting or even satirizing racial stereotypes is, of course, through direct contact with people of different races and cultures. Asked if they found their first exposure to white people, or to being in a racial minority, upsetting, those who do remember it as initially difficult relate that sooner or later, they realised that, for example, *'people are just people and that's basically it'* (F4). F13, who boarded at her private high school, where most of the other boarders were white, similarly remarks that *'you just got used to living [with them]'*.

Interestingly, F8 suggests that some black parents deliberately *'taught'* their children to *'stick to the white children'* at school, not so much for the cultural exposure as for the sake of their English abilities, although the results, in terms of adjusting to 'white culture,' would presumably be the same. F8 explains that her case was different, since *'someone like me who went to nursery school with white children, could interact with them and I'd really known*

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<sup>37</sup> However, she is aware that this is only possible in her generation; and that in her mother's, asking 'is it because I'm black?' would have a very different meaning, and could not be a joke.

*English so I didn't need to stick to them much'*, although she did have many white friends anyway. As well as already knowing English, she also had already been exposed to the nature of 'whiteness'; a comment like this harks back to the earlier point about children who were exposed to 'whiteness' and 'Englishness' later, having more difficulty in adjusting<sup>38</sup>.

More interestingly still, F8 explains that her exposure to white culture meant that she was able to initiate her parents into 'white', or perhaps rather middle-class, behaviours too:

F8: *Interacting with white children [...] brought on a sense of independence and I could – [...] having the flexible parents that I have - you know I could go home and [...] teach them things like mom you need to give me pocket money, mom you need to do, this and that you know.*

F15 makes a similar comment about her own mother, stating that she encouraged her to 'believe what I wanted to believe as long as I had a reason for it'. By contrast, she explains:

F15: *It's not usual in a [...] black home; it's - you believe what your parents believe and, and that's all. You're not allowed to question their beliefs or question their kind of commands or whatever.*

Comments such as these seem to suggest a willing, or even deliberate, 'assimilation' into 'white' and/or middle-class culture; which ties in to the rejection of stereotypes of 'blackness'. However, it also suggests that, as found in de Klerk's (2000) study, some parents are at least complicit, if not openly encouraging, in the process; although, of course, this does not hold for all or even most of the speakers' families.

In examining the notion of assimilation, the reactions of speakers who entered the white education system very young to the presence of increasing numbers of black students in their schools, can be very telling. F33 summarises the general 'white-school' attitude most clearly, in explaining how she felt about being in a racial minority at school:

F33: *At the time [...] it was a good thing, you know because [...] I don't, this is - it's bad but then, the more black kids there would be like the lower the standard would get [...] That was just like a, like a general, sort of, feeling around [...] I mean I don't know if it's necessarily true that the standard went lower but that's just how, it's how ja how everyone felt.*

On the basis of this prevailing attitude, it might be assumed that the more 'assimilated' the black student, the less positive their reactions to changes in school demographics could be.

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<sup>38</sup> See Chapter 4 on F8; her upbringing contrasts strongly with aspects of her English accent.

Obviously there is no such simple correlation, but there are some speakers who viewed the changes in their schools in a negative light, although not unquestioningly. F22's high school changed from a private to a 'government' school while she was there, and although she sounds embarrassed in explaining this, says:

F22: *And then the change happened. When the [coughs] when the black teachers<sup>39</sup> came, you know? [...] Then like ja, the school just became more of a black school than like a, a private school.*

Later, she explains what this meant:

F22: *When the school was private it was, very like strict and, we had rules and - when the school turned government we just broke all those rules.*

She nevertheless explicitly includes herself among the rule-breakers, despite her apparent disapproval of the changes. F8, however, distanced herself from the new students; and she sees the matter as one of class rather than race:

F8: *I dunno if this is gonna sound controversial but um, what I found was that [...] with the evolving of the school there were different classes of income earners, bringing their children to the school as well. And mostly it was low income earners and the upbringing [...] I think I'd be safe in saying was not the same. And, that's what changed the school mostly. [...] I don't think it's so much of a racial issue more than it is about, you know the way that you've been brought up.*

She does not wholly separate race and class, however; this quote directly precedes the one (see above) where she ascribes her ability to 'teach' her parents middle-class behaviour to the fact that she had grown up around white children – thus by upbringing, she is not necessarily referring to home life.

### **3.9 Not simple assimilation?**

However, despite these factors, any 'assimilation' that takes place is not simple or entire; as several comments suggest, it is more likely a new, not explicitly racial identity that the speakers are asserting, rather than a simple case of 'black on the outside, white on the inside'. Although all the speakers (apart from M7; and of course the two 'mixed-race' speakers) unhesitatingly class themselves as 'black', and in general use racial terminology freely, it is clear that their notion of their own 'blackness' is different to that of the broader black

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<sup>39</sup> In the vast majority of ex-Model C schools, the teaching body remains white even in schools where the students are all black; most other speakers report that the only black teachers they ever had were those who taught an African language – and sometimes not even that.



population of South Africa; and also that significant differences exist among the speakers themselves.

M1, for example, in discussing cultural differences that he had to adapt to on entering the ‘white’ education system, gives as an example the use of eye-contact: ‘*in Zulu culture*’ it is disrespectful to ‘*eye-contact*’ someone older than you; in his white school, the opposite was true. From this example, he generalises about cultural changes among ‘*the youth*’ in general:

M1: *Now sort of I mean culture has like faded quite a bit you know? Like amongst like the youth and stuff. [Now] when I speak to my parents I look them straight in the eye.*

His parents, however, accept this: as in the examples above, parents do not necessarily oppose their children’s integration into ‘white’, middle class culture. Exceptions, as always, exist however, as in F23’s mother’s complaints about the ‘twang’ in her daughter’s accent (see above and Chapter 4).

### **3.10 A new identity via language?**

Several other speakers comment fairly explicitly on the fact that they believe a new type of ‘youth identity’ is being created, largely recognisable via language - or other interactional features, as above; and they ascribe this to the existence of (partly)-multiracial schools. F17, who as above recognises herself as being a ‘juggler’ of mainstream black and white cultures, as a result of her background and schooling, also recognises that she is not alone in this middle ground. She states that a friend of hers recently claimed that ‘*people are starting to sound the same*’, and she agrees that, with the exception of those Model Cs whose English has a ‘twang’ which is ‘*very Americanny*’, this is true:

F17: *Everyone else you know, tends to sound the same [...] I was like I dunno speaking to people on the phone that I’d never met and you kind of think someone’s a black person and he’s turned out to be a white guy. And you know so it’s it is really starting to sound the same.*

Although she says ‘*everyone else*’, she recognises that ‘black-schooled’ people have a different accent; thus it is clear that by ‘*everyone else*’ she means everyone – of whatever ‘race’ – with the same educational history as hers.

The speakers therefore recognise that it is exposure to ‘Englishness’ and/or whiteness that has brought about these changes, but also acknowledge more general cultural mixing in the new South Africa as an influence. Significantly, it is in the context of interaction with black

friends, as much as in mixed groups, that these identities are played out, so that the linguistic and other changes are no longer a simple matter of accommodation to an immediate ‘white’ social environment. The majority of the speakers state that, in interaction with only black friends, and even with black friends who all share a HL, it is English, or an English-HL mixture, which predominates. F23 is fairly typical in explaining this by reference to enforced English at school:

F23: *You tend to, after years of being told to speak English - you know we all communicate in English now.*

Others, of course, explain that their friendship groups are so ethnically, and hence linguistically, mixed, that English is the only option:

F3: *Even though I may not be hanging out with white people all the time, it’s because I’m interacting with so many - [...] there’s so many cultures happening around me, and the common language we’ve got is English.*

Accurate though both of these viewpoints may well be, there is a third potential explanation: that English has simply become an integral part of their linguistic repertoire, and presumably their ‘(South African) youth’ identities. F14 explains this the most clearly, though there are others who make similar points:

F14: *I think that nowadays because we all communicate in English, it’s sort of become a - this is our language as teenagers [...] where you can be who you want to be [...] when you’re in English you can just be, because that’s the language we all use among all of us anyway [...] I think it’s a matter of, when we switch to English, we become comfortable [...] Some argue that it should be the other way round seeing as English is our second language but, you know, you become more comfortable in that way.*

F1 makes a similar point, but here with respect to her mother’s recognition of this ‘Englishness’ in the youth:

F1: *Sometimes when she wants to say something serious to me, and she understands that with the day and age that I’m living in, English is the more appropriate language, as compared to then back in the days. So she feels sometimes if she wants to convey a message to me properly, she’ll rather say it in the language that maybe I’ll understand properly.*

The use of English is therefore the most obvious index of this new youth identity, but, as suggested above, it is very seldom English in an unmixed form: as M9 discusses his language use, he elaborates to explain that:

M9: *I suppose even with my black friends in Cape Town, we still speak English. [...] Like there's almost like a South African [...] language<sup>40</sup> now which is spoken, like you start in English and then you like finish off in Zulu and you'll start your next sentence in Sotho etcetera [...] but it is still mainly English.*

F32 perhaps expresses the attitude to this 'language', or rather pattern of usage, best, in explaining why she is most comfortable with people who speak both English and her HL, Sotho:

F32: *There're just some things that don't sound normal in Sotho. That's why we speak English [...] I guess that's why there's a sense of relief when you meet someone that speaks both languages coz there're just some things – [...] it doesn't have the same meaning when I say it in English [...] And even the other way round there're just some things that, when I say them in Sotho [...] it just doesn't have the same feel to it.*

Of course, while this attitude is reportedly the case in the majority of the speakers, there are exceptions, though they are few, and their backgrounds are recognisably different from the rest, so that they seem to reinforce the pattern. As examples, F18 is older than the rest and was exposed to 'Englishness' at a later age, and so feels 'relief' when she can speak Swati to family members back home on the phone. F10, as mentioned above, is particularly unusual in that her schooling and neighbourhood have always been entirely 'white', but she is nonetheless more comfortable in her HL, Sotho, explaining that '*in the evening you just don't want to speak English any more*', because '*English is a bit heavy on the tongue*'. She explains her ambivalence to English by reference to her parents' attitudes:

F10: *I grew up at a time when my parents were still very angry with white people. And having [...] those kind of comments you know, 'You know white people they always want to make you speak English,' [...] you're like okay, maybe I shouldn't speak English.*

Even under these circumstances, the exceptions all state that they are thoroughly comfortable in using English; the only difference is that they find their HLs more comfortable.

An interesting case which both mirrors the strong HL-maintenance pattern of the above speakers, but also strengthens the role of English as interethnic lingua franca, is that of Xhosa

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<sup>40</sup> Note that this does not, however, appear to refer to well-known urban 'mixed lects' such as Tsotsitaal; those speakers explicitly questioned on this point made it clear that this is not part of their repertoire. The precise nature of this mixing, however, deserves further investigation.

speakers. 'Xhosa pride' in their language and culture is strong, and several speakers mention it; what this seems to translate into is an unwillingness or refusal to learn other African languages. As F25 explains,

F25: *Apparently we have a reputation, as Xhosa [...] of being very proud [laughs] [...] Maybe Sotho people will learn Xhosa or Zulu, or Zulu people will learn kind of - especially if they're from Joburg. But if you find a Xhosa person from the Eastern Cape, the stereotype is, they won't want to hear about anything. If you don't speak Xhosa, speak English.*

Although it is a stereotype, it is nonetheless interesting to note that English, here, takes on the role of lingua franca presumably because it seems more of a 'neutral' option than condescending to learn another African language. F25 herself either uses only English, or else Xhosa, with Zulu and Swati speaking friends - with the exception of certain words, the three languages are similar enough to be mutually intelligible; but she refuses to use the words from the other languages, because *'I'm very clear about me and my Xhosa. Just, no. I don't want to be imitating Zulu speakers'*.

### **3.11 Language shift? Attitudes towards the next generation**

Since it is clear that in most cases, even among the exceptions, using English – though often in combination with one's HL or other African language(s) - has become integral to the speakers' interactional norms, we might assume that the dire media prophecies (and the indications in de Klerk's (2000) Eastern Cape study) of imminent language shift among the 'new black middle class' could have some truth. The real picture, in this speaker sample, is of course more complicated: when discussing their attitudes to future marriage and children, most of the speakers are adamant that their children will be raised in their own HL and English – as well as, if they are open to 'interracial' or 'interethnic' marriages, the HL of their future spouse. As F32 puts it, *'I'm all for kids that can speak as many languages as possible'*. Indeed, the speakers are generally aware of young children's ability to learn multiple languages easily, and several express a wish that they themselves had been exposed to more languages in childhood.

Their desire for their future children to know their HLs is, however, usually mixed with a belief that English will continue to increase in importance in South African society; and therefore they feel they have a responsibility to ensure that their 'own' languages are not lost. They are aware of the perception that black children are increasingly raised only in English,

and indeed, many of them know children like this; and thus fear for their ability to raise their own children as fluently multilingual. F6 links this directly to education. Although there is some ambivalence among the speakers about 'white' schooling for their children, because they are aware of its effects on their own HL ability, they accept it as inevitable, but worry about some of the consequences. F6's quote below raises many of the common themes around this topic, and so I have given it almost in full:

F6: *It's gonna be very hard to raise your child knowing your language and being able to read it [...] coz even at home it's gonna be an English-speaking home, because you can't like send them to a Zulu school [...] Let's say I've graduated from Cape Town and I'm working a good job to send the child to a private school and they can also come to UCT. I can't exactly like take the child to like a government Xhosa or Zulu or Sotho-speaking school and expect them to like learn from there when I know I can afford a better school. Coz now it's all about the good education and not about whether you know your language or not. You know you have to know the international language to go somewhere in life you know [...] Obviously you're gonna try your best to like speak your language [...] You're not the only one raising your child as they're gonna go visit other people and your aunts and your grandparents and you know everyone, so it is gonna be the home language, Zulu. But when the child starts going to school and going to grade R and they meet the white kids and they all speak English and then, they're gonna grow up like that and then, they're gonna come home to you and start speaking to you in English and even if you answer the child in Zulu you know it's [...] not gonna make much of a difference anymore.*

Not all the speakers are this pessimistic; and it is again the Xhosa speakers who are most confident that their child will be a fluent Xhosa-speaker; but nonetheless they are all aware of the dangers. F32 is adamant that she will raise her children to know Sotho, in addition to as many other languages as she can expose them to, but feels that ultimately she will not be able to control their linguistic destinies; her duty is simply to make sure that they have a choice:

F32: *I know I don't want kids that just speak English. It annoys me, it bothers me; I worry about it [...] I mean I'm not saying now they're gonna have to grow up and embrace [Sotho] the way I do. I just feel that it's only right that they actually know about it and they grow up in that light. And I guess after that, look, it's up to you, dear. As long as you learned it when I taught you.*

F6's mention of the fact that '*you're not the only one raising your child*', so that extended family will have an influence, has more importance when one considers those of the speakers who have little or no ability in their HL. F13 is '*not very good at Zulu*', and when asked whether she feels it will be important for her future children to know Zulu, is somewhat offhand about it. Since she feels unable to raise them in Zulu herself, she places responsibility in the hands of her extended family:

F13: *They'll learn it through their grandparents or take some lessons [laughing] [...] I don't know they'll learn it [laughs] Just chuck them in the environment where they'll speak it.*

This offhanded optimism contrasts with F15's attitude; as discussed above, her own ability in Zulu is now very low, but she does not want English-monolingual children. While she realises that she herself cannot raise them in Zulu, she nonetheless hopes that they will learn other languages via their father and extended family:

F15: *As far-fetched as it sounds [...] I would like to raise my children - I mean regardless of who I marry; you know say I marry someone who speaks Venda or English [...] - my children should know both languages [...] I would have grown up much better, having known Sotho and having known Zulu and having known English too. I believe it's possible. It's just that - I just didn't get that.*

Similarly to F15, F18 is less concerned with her children's learning her HL, than she is with them knowing any African language. Her current boyfriend is Sotho-speaking, while she speaks Swati; although she says she would try and teach any future children Swati, because '*I really really want to hold onto my language*', she also thinks that where they would live would have an impact. Thus she feels that '*either [language] is fine as long as it's an African language*.'

M9, who (as above) feels that his schooling and, latterly, neighbourhood, have affected his connection to 'Africanness', wants any children he has to be fluent in English, but also adds - somewhat wistfully, since he is not convinced it will be possible:

M9: *But I would really really really want them to be fluent in Sotho and um, and also more, perhaps more culturally aware than myself and a lot of my peers. And maintain, like a sense of, a sense of being African.*

On the other hand, F26, unusually - and particularly so for a Xhosa speaker, it seems - is unconcerned about whether her future children learn her HL or not. When asked, she says

first that she doesn't think she'll have any children, and if she were to, she had never thought about language. However, if she has some,

F26: *to some degree they must be able to understand the language and speak it [...] I'm not very sentimental though about such things, but perhaps my mom would feel that they should? [...] If anyone wants it to happen, I would help but, if no-one's enforcing it it's okay.*

She says that her father did not force the issue with her, but rather she wanted to learn it, so 'if they want to that's great. [But] I wouldn't really force it'.

In a marked contrast to all of these (nonetheless varying) attitudes, one speaker - F34 - does not plan to teach her future children English at home at all: asked what languages she will raise them in, she replies:

F34: *Whatever their father speaks and Zulu, at home. But like not English, no [...] But they'd go to an English school obviously. But no, we'd speak Zulu or whatever language at home.*

F34 is an exception in several other ways too: she is one of the speakers who has never mixed English with her HL at home; was only exposed to 'whiteness' in high school; and, in contrast to speakers such as F29 and F30, cannot imagine marrying someone who only spoke English, 'because speaking English to a black person always feels weird to me, or that you're speaking English all the time'. If they had no language in common but English, she would rather learn her husband's (African) language than use English at home. She is a definite exception in this matter; all the other speakers (to whom the question was put) take it for granted that they will speak English with their children, and worry more about the difficulties of teaching them their 'home language'.

Before considering the matter of who the speakers would consider 'going out with' or later marrying, or their concerns about their children's schooling, there is a point raised in F6's quote above which is worth mentioning, as an aside. She is the only speaker to mention her future children's ability to *read* an African language; and this is easily explained by the fact that she is one of the very few speakers in the sample able to read her HL herself: the others do not consider the matter because it is generally outside their experience. In F6's case she can read Zulu because she began her education in a Zulu-medium school (for one year), and thus first learned to read and write in it; and then took it as a second-language subject in high school (for a 'guaranteed pass'). Very few of the other speakers have this ability; where they

do, it is either for similar reasons to F6's, or because a parent or grandparent deliberately taught them outside of school. An interesting case is M4, who has recently found himself wanting to use Xhosa in his text messages and in online chat, as a natural extension of the way he mixes Xhosa and English in his speech. He spells phonetically, and feels that his written ability in Xhosa is '*just below average*', despite the fact that he was never taught to read and write in it - while his mother, who was, claims otherwise:

M4: *I know when I write it to my mother she always is just like, 'What the hell's going on?' She's like, 'Rather you write it in English because I can't understand what you're trying to say'.*

However, F8, who took her HL as a third-language subject in high school, so has very basic literacy in it, claims that black parents in general are unhappy that their children cannot read or write in their HL. She says that she finds it very difficult, '*which the black culture doesn't accept much; like our parents don't like that much that we can't write in Zulu.*' Nonetheless, since only F6 mentions HL-literacy in the context of future children, it is a pattern that is likely to continue.

Leaving this matter aside, it is clear that the majority of speakers are committed to raising any future children as fluent bilinguals, even if not literate in their HL; although most (and especially those whose own HL ability is low) have legitimate concerns about how feasible this will prove. Of course, not all of them are concerned about language, and those who cannot speak an African language fluently may have no choice but English monolingualism, unless they can rely on their future spouses or their extended families for help; but nonetheless the overwhelming feeling from the interviews as a whole is that African languages ought to be preserved within the speakers' future families. Even among those such as F10, who are apparently unaware that broader black South African society sees language shift towards English as catastrophic (see above), the attitude prevails:

F10: *I think it's very very important that children know how to speak their language [...] It's okay to speak in English, but you have to at least be able to understand what people are saying when they're speaking in your African language you know [...] I don't think people struggled all those years so that we could speak English.*

The idea of 'ethnic ownership' (see above) of language is still clear, though here it is projected into the future: for most of the speakers, their future children have an African language as a birthright; and it is their parents' moral responsibility to ensure that they can acquire one - if not more.



### **3.11.1 Future schooling of the next generation**

Attitudes such as this are, as F6 has indicated, inevitably tied up with concerns about the type(s) of schools the speakers would like their future children to attend. They know from personal experience, and from witnessing that of friends and classmates, the effect that a 'white' education can have on a child's HL ability, as well as on his/her attitudes. While no speaker suggests sending their future children to an 'ordinary' or 'black' government school for their full education, there are nonetheless differences in their plans: some would prefer to avoid a 'private' school until high school - or at all - having seen first-hand the 'snobbish' attitudes that can result; while others want 'the best' for their children right from the start. F23 attended a government primary school, of mixed black and coloured students, and a (still 'public' but 'white') Model C high school, and feels that any children she might have should have a similar experience:

F23: *Definitely, ja [...] coz I went to a public school. So in high school I'd send them to a private school, but in primary, from pre-primary I'd send them to a very very very mixed public school.*

Her reasons for this are clearly thought out, and typical of the type, so I have quoted her almost in full below:

F23: *I have friends from private schools and, they're nice people, but they tend to be snobs [...] I feel like because I [...] got both sides, I tend to be more accepting of people [...] I don't judge people as quickly as they do*

Thus she believes her very mixed primary school has given her the ability to meet different types of people, and interact with them in a way that private-schooled people are unable to do. More tellingly, she goes on to claim that private-schooled people are cut off from general 'black' norms of behaviour, which makes them 'aloof'. For example:

F23: *When you grow up around a lot of black people you learn to - you know that you greet people randomly, not because you know them or because it's gonna do anything for you but just because they're people walking [...] You're taught that. So you learn to just see people as people.*

This is something which private-schooled 'snobs' apparently cannot do. However, she is aware of the advantages that a private education can bring, which is why she is willing to expose her future children to it, but only after they have learned open-mindedness:

F23: *I like the [...] quality of the education I think it's very good and I wish I could have gone to a private school. I think I got a pretty good school, [...] but I'm not gonna lie: private schools have a better quality education [...] But in terms of just relating*

*with people, like at all levels, I think you're better off at a public school where you [...] interact with rich people and poor people at the same time. But in private schools everyone's rich, so it closes you off to a lot of people.*

M1 transferred from a private to a government (but ex-Model C) school in Standard 4, but would not want his children to have the same experience - rather, he agrees with F23's opinion, saying that '*maybe I'd send them to a private school like in high school and stuff but not off the bat*'. He too explains this by reference to his own experience, where on arriving in public school he realised how rarefied the atmosphere at his private school had been:

M1: *I didn't know what the real world was like [...] When I went to [public school] and all these people were swearing like you know, it was nobody's problem, I was like, [laughing] 'What? My ears, man. Geez' [...] Especially private primary schools, they didn't make me experience what other kids were, you know [...] It took a while to get used to; [I] kept on thinking like, flip these guys are animals, you know? [...] It's a pretty warped like sense of reality when you go to [private] schools [...] like the whole not speaking vernac thing [...] it's crazy.*

Thus here he raises one of the points that many speakers make, about being forbidden to speak one's 'vernac' or HL at school, and particularly primary schools. Although M1 sees this as a private school issue, there are also reports from ex-Model C primary schools where this occurred. In most cases, speakers were simply told it was '*rude*' to speak a language not everyone could understand; but several add that they thought the teachers and white students '*felt threatened*' by it. However, some mention that, at least in primary school, they saw a purpose to it:

F32: *In primary school I understand the rationale behind it; you want to get the child as exposed to the language as possible so it's easier to pick it up. But high school, please.*

Either because they realised this, or simply because adolescents are more rebellious, most of the speakers mention that, even if there was a ban on speaking 'vernac' in high school, they ignored it.

M9 is equally ambivalent, because he, as above, feels that he missed out on 'Africanness' because of his private schooling; and he wants his children to be more '*culturally aware*' than he is. However, he also appreciates some things about private schools:

M9: *I've thought about this, and [...] what I did appreciate about [my school] is um, from the age of 5 till 8 [...] it's very like - you've got to greet everyone that you come across, so it's like, 'Morning ma'am, morning sir,' [...] manners and everything [...] which I did like [...] I can see that in a lot of the guys that started with us from the age of 5, um, just treat people with more respect than some of the guys that came in like later on.*

However, although he appreciates this, he is also afraid of sending his future children to private primary schools *'because of that whole snobby factor [...] like gentleman's clubs [...] which I really didn't like and still don't like'*. On the other hand, *'you can't send someone to a township school and then not feel like, you're giving them a disadvantage'*. Thus he is still undecided.

M9's perception of the manners and respect shown by children educated in private schools contrasts strongly with F22's perspective; she sees white schooling as eroding *'imperative'* aspects of *'black culture'*, or more specifically *'Tswana culture'*, such as respect for elders.

These plans for the speakers' future children obviously reveal their own perceptions of different types of schools, as well as their attitudes to the adequacy of their own education. It is interesting to note that perceptions of *'black schools'* or *'township schools'* are still very negative, mostly because of the poor quality of education, even where one of their parents teaches in one; many of the speakers are the children of teachers. No doubt their teacher-parents themselves taught them this attitude, since they were determined that their children receive a better education than their own schools could provide. F6's parents have both been school principals in the past, but she says they *'wanted the best school [for their children], and their schools weren't the best'*. Also, *'from their point of view they just thought [...] 'my children have to know English to move forward'.'*

The speakers' education is, of course, ongoing, since all but F29 were UCT students when interviewed. Most say that they chose UCT for its prestige, although, of course, some also chose it simply because it was far away from their parents. A few comment that they were amazed to *'get in'* to UCT, and had already accepted places at another university when the acceptance letter arrived; but most seem to have been confident of acceptance, presumably because of their high grades, and the fact that pupils from their schools frequently go on to

UCT. In terms of subjects for study, F14 and M7 both explain, from slightly different perspectives, what 'black parents' generally expect from their children:

F14: *Black people tend to have this - and I am generalising here so please excuse me [...] There's this mentality that we've come from a hard place, and you have to prove yourself; we never had these advantages that you guys have, we never had these privileges so now prove yourself. And the measure of success is money, unfortunately [...] so you know the fancy cars and the big houses they speak volumes [...] Whether you're black or white generally, that's it, if you do commerce or whatever you're bound to be more successful than if you were doing a humanities degree. So most black children would say to their parents, I want to do theatre, I want to do drama, I want to be a humanities student. And the parents would outrule that completely.*

M7 too discusses the scarcity of black students in the Faculty of Humanities, and like F14, if less sympathetically, attributes this to the fact that 'black people tend to be very [...] capital-oriented'. Similarly, he bemoans the lack of black students in welfare or development societies; 'they're more likely to join Black Management Forum, Investment Society, something that's gonna enrich them'. Thus he says that in terms of what he has observed, most black students are studying Commerce, Science or Engineering; and in his Social Anthropology course, only about 5% of the students are black.

Both these speakers are exceptions, though not the only ones, in that their parents allowed them to choose their own degree, according to their interests: F14 is a Drama student, and M7 is pursuing a Bachelor of Social Science. F14 comments that she has many friends who were told that if they wanted to study something other than Commerce, they would have to pay for it themselves. It is not surprising, therefore, that the majority of the speakers in the sample are registered in the faculties of Commerce or Engineering; nor is it surprising that several state, like F22, that they intend to work in their field of study only until they have made enough money to do what they really want to do:

F22: *No I don't [like studying accounting]. I'd rather study - I wanted to do something in the performance arts field [...] I guess I'm gonna end up like filling up the job that the degree can fill; but after a while, I plan to retire - I'm gonna work hard, save and invest lots of money, and retire. And have my own restaurant.*

However, she accepts her parents' wisdom in insisting she study something practical:

F22: *Considering our economy as well, you know I mean if things don't work out you have something to fall back on anyway. So it isn't so bad even though we're forced to, you know what I mean? [...] The rewards are like very tangible.*

The speakers are all, therefore, fairly certain of what they want their futures to contain, even if at present, and for some considerable time in the future, many are confined to doing something else. Additionally, it is perhaps worth mentioning that in contrast to the 'brain-drain' scenario typical of the South African economy, all are committed to staying in South Africa. Although some of them want to travel and perhaps work overseas for some time, South Africa is nonetheless 'home', and not a single one has any intention of emigrating permanently. As a fairly typical exchange on this topic, F7 discusses her future plans:<sup>41</sup>

F7: *I could branch out international. But [...] I want to apply my skills to benefit South Africa. I really love our country, really I do. So I can go international, but home is always where the heart is.*

I: *You'd always come back?*

F7: *Always. Definitely, definitely.*

Having discussed the speakers' attitudes towards the future in terms of children and careers, it is now necessary to examine their attitudes towards marriage, in terms of the 'race' or ethnicity that they would like to marry and have children with. Of course, this also relates to who they would consider 'going out with' now; and so is not all future-oriented. All of it, however, is revealing in terms of their attitudes to race.

### **3.11.2 Future marriage and relationships**

As a first point, it should be noted that in several cases, most speakers state that they themselves would have no real objection to going out with or marrying a person of another ethnicity or even race (see below); but that their families, and particularly elder members or extended family members, would be shocked. This is not always the case, of course; and F4's response shows the possibility of family objection, but also the likelihood that they would eventually accept her marrying someone not Pedi, or not even black. Thus she replied via email (to one I sent her after the interview):

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<sup>41</sup> She is a first year student in politics and economics - another Humanities exception; and wants to become a political economist.

F4: *I can pretty much marry whoever I want. My immediate family won't mind but my gran etc. may have a problem with it initially, but I pretty much doubt it. My family is pretty chilled about that sort of thing. I think they'd be happy I married at all.*

Similarly, F2, asked if her family expects her to marry a Xhosa man, replied:

F2: *No. I don't think they'd really mind. Like they know times are changing [...] It's not really an issue as long as we keep our traditions, and we don't forget where we come from and we do the whole traditional, introducing to ancestors thing which I really don't believe in [...] I wouldn't mind, but then I'd have to do it, for my family you know so, if there weren't any problems with that then it'd be [fine].<sup>42</sup>*

Some speakers, however, are simply unwilling to date or marry outside their own ethnicity; F25, for example, is in a 'serious relationship' with another Xhosa speaker (her first boyfriend), and does not think she could ever go out with someone not Xhosa:

F25: *I doubt I'd actually go out with someone who wasn't. Not because of anything but because um, cultural differences make a big difference. They do. Especially if you're like in a serious relationship because there are differences that are just - they're hard to reconcile sometimes; and there're just some things [...in] a culture you can't explain [...] And also just, with vernac, you know, when you're angry - nothing beats Xhosa, or your own language, your home language.*

The issues around language and relationships, as raised by F25, are interesting, not least because of what they reveal about the speaker's true language preferences. F32, in discussing which of her languages she uses when, gives as an example:

F32: *For instance, the concept of love in Sotho and English. For me to translate 'I love you' and say it into Sotho - my word, to me it's a hectic thing like whoa. I've gotta really love you [laughing] for me to say it in Sotho to you, you know what I mean? In English it can be a casual thing.*

I asked only a few people if they would consider going out with someone who could not speak English, but their answers were very revealing. Although F4 replied simply, 'Sure, as long as we understood each other somehow it would be fine', F29 and F30, and F23, gave far

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<sup>42</sup> There is no space to explore it here, but religious beliefs and attitudes are very varied; most speakers are Christians, but M10's mother is a sangoma while he is sceptical of all religion; M1 finds his parents' combination of traditional beliefs and Christianity confusing; and F2 herself, despite not believing in Xhosa traditions, is looking forward to a traditional 'slaughter' in the Eastern Cape for her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

more interesting answers. F29 and F30, as mentioned above, were interviewed together; and when the issue arose it caused much hilarity:

F29: *My dad said to me once [...] ‘Would you ever date a guy, who does not know how to speak English?’ and I was like no [laughing]<sup>43</sup>*

F30: *I’ve had that experience as well*

F29: *And my dad’s like why? And I’m like, first of all, my friends are gonna laugh at me [laughter]. And ja, I can speak Xhosa, like, I can say that I’m quite fluent, but sometimes I have to bring in the English words [...] 80% of my Xhosa conversation will be in Xhosa, then I’ll just kick in a few English words, type of thing.*

F30: *I think like the way I grew up, I would also probably, not be very welcoming to someone who couldn’t speak English [laughs]*

F29: *Ja it’s irritating [laughing]*

F30: *You’re like, ‘Oh, my gosh’. Coz like we laugh at those people, it’s just like ‘Oh my god, that dude can’t speak English’. Or like people who speak like broken English or whatever, like oh my god [laughter]. Like I don’t think I’d be able to [laughing]. I know it’s like a bad thing to say but like, uh-uh.*

F23 explains more precisely why she would have a problem with dating a non-English speaker, when asked if she would:

F23: *No. No-oh-oh [laughing] [...] That would never ever happen [laughs] ever. [...] I could go out with someone who couldn’t speak Xhosa but [sighs] no. Coz you know English, for some reason - and you can’t just speak English, you can’t have an accent either [...] It’s sort of a sign of how educated you are, which is weird because this person could be a maths genius or something [...] They’d have to meet my friends and, you know, be able to speak with my friends and [laughs] I couldn’t. It wouldn’t work. And even at home, even though we speak Xhosa, but people at home are very educated. And if this person couldn’t speak English it can only mean that they aren’t educated, you know? [...] And that just would be a total no-no. No. No no no no no.*

Although, for these speakers, English is a strict requirement in dating, this does not mean that white or coloured (and presumably not Indian either) English speakers are welcome. Both F29 and F30 have dated ‘coloured guys’ in the past, but both found the experience ‘weird’ and would not repeat it. F30 ‘almost kissed a white guy once [...] but then, like, I couldn’t do

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<sup>43</sup> That F29 can talk to her father about dating is itself telling, since F25 comments that ‘Black parents [...] this whole relationship thing doesn’t go down well with them’.

*it. I don't know why [...] I really don't.*' F29 is more open to the idea, but makes it clear that it is cultural, rather than racial, differences which put her off:

F29: *I think if I find a white guy that is like, similar to the black guys that I date, yeah it would be ok.*

F23, when asked, has no problem with dating non-Xhosa speakers, but is unsure about her attitudes to dating outside of her 'race', and is sure that even if she did, she would not consider marrying the man:

F23: *I don't know about that. I'd like to think I. don't mind but it's never come to that. I don't know why. I think we all think we're liberated but not really that liberated. I know I couldn't marry one who's not black because my mom wouldn't be too pleased. It wouldn't be very comfortable in my family [...] I don't know it's never come up, so I haven't really like given it serious thought.*

Not all the speakers are opposed to interracial relationships, however; M1 is engaged to a white Afrikaans woman, and M9, although he at first opposed the idea because he was trying to get back in touch with his lost 'Africanness', is now willing to marry someone of any race, 'just as long as the person gives me room to identify myself as an African.' F12 admits that she doesn't 'attach an adult's mind to it', but:

F12: *I just think it would be fun to have children with like - if you marry a white, like she'd have nice hair instead of like, irritating black people's hair [...] but ja I've always said I'd like to marry into a different race, just to like mix the children up and stuff.*

There is therefore plenty of variation among the speakers, and no clear pattern with regard to race and ethnicity in dating and marriage emerges. In terms of their current friendships, however, a clearer pattern exists, although, of course, there are exceptions. The majority of the speakers, however, have found that since their arrival at UCT, their friendships have become mostly 'black', regardless of what their friendship group at school was like. M4, for example, explains that although in high school, 'I never got along with the other black kids, it was just - nothing happened, we just did not click' states:

M4: *It's strange because when I got [...] to UCT I was just like, it was so nice because there was a whole lot of, a whole lot of black people I could socialize with. [...] Now it was different because, there's a whole lot of black people and you know they're smart, we're all here, and everyone is on the same level you know.*



Thus although in high school, he spoke English all day with his white and coloured friends, he now finds that:

M4: *I speak [Xhosa] a whole lot more now than I ever did [...] I think I was tired of just speaking English [...] all day long. And it does - now it doesn't make sense to be speaking English with other black people.*

Not all speakers have had the same experience in terms of language; as discussed above, most of them have found that even if they have entirely black friendship groups, they mostly use English, with some mixing. As F23 explains, although 'most of my friends are black, the ratio's higher now than it was in high school. And the white friends that I do have are from high school', they nonetheless speak English to each other. Her explanation for this is that:

F23: *I think we all think in English, so it's easier to just speak it in English. Coz you find that, unfortunately you have to translate something from English to your, you know to Xhosa or to Sotho or to Tswana. Ja, so it just takes long so you might as well just speak in English.*

There are, of course, exceptions to the race-pattern, and several speakers continue to have very racially mixed friendship networks. F31 describes the 'race split' in her high school, but says that she was, to a limited extent, one of the few students there who mixed with other races. This inevitably caused trouble, and she describes the other black students' attitudes as '*it would be a bit like, what's wrong with you, why can't you just mix with us*'. However, at university:

F31: *I've got my own little group now. And we're mixed. So yay. Everyone else is like school but we're just like whatever, you know, we have the same interests, we're not gonna force and pretend that we're not gonna be friends.*

### **3.12 Descriptions of and attitudes to accents: 'the twang'**

Before turning to a description of the speakers' accents, it is useful to examine their own perceptions of, and attitudes to, their own and other people's accents. As shown above, F17 believes that it is now often impossible to tell a white and black<sup>44</sup> speaker apart from their accents, unless the black speaker has an 'Americanny' 'twang'. Similarly, F29 explains how as a young child, she did perceive a difference between races, but '*now, you don't really see, you don't really notice whether it's a black person or a white person coz we're all acting the same now [laugh] so there's not much difference; we do we speak the same language.*'

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<sup>44</sup> Assuming they were both educated in the former 'white' education system, of course.

Although she is referring to more than language and accent, her point remains close to F17's; people educated in the 'white' system all turn out *'the same'* to some extent. She also mentions the *'South African Bantu accent'*, by contrast to her own and her friends'.

In terms of 'the twang', there are somewhat contradictory comments and attitudes. As above, F17 sees it as *'Americanny'*, and not like a usual white-schooled accent; but others' comments suggest that what they mean by 'the twang' is, in fact, simply a white-schooled accent. F23, as above, describes her mother's reaction to her accent, especially when she was rehearsing for public speaking in high school:

F23: *She laughs at me coz like sometimes she's like, I twang too much and she can't hear me [...] She'd say I must, I must, I must speak properly. You know I must stop with the twang, I must speak like more, black, ja, so people can hear me.*<sup>45</sup>

F27 conflates the two versions of the twang by claiming that all white-schooled accents in black people are American-sounding:

F27: *I think sometimes people who go to white schools overcompensate, then they have this whole [...] American accent I've noticed. I think it sounds quite normal. [...] But then some people say that no there is a difference, you can actually hear when the person has been to a private school or a model C school or whatever.*

Like M7 (above), F27 is apparently not certain that she has 'an accent' at all; both seem to think that they just sound *'normal'*, whatever they mean by this.

How 'American' or otherwise the speakers' accents are will be briefly examined in the following chapter; however, it is also interesting to see their attitudes to the BSAE accent. There are not many comments, although occasionally a speaker has used a mock-BSAE accent to describe township attitudes to their being white schooled (see above). F21 and F22, interviewed together, do discuss attitudes to the accent, as well as their own, however:

F22: *When a black person can't speak English properly, the first thing people assume is that they're uneducated [...] A black person who you can clearly see is a professor or whatever, they have broken English - no. 'Why do they get a dumb person to come teach us, who can't even speak English properly?' [...] They'll just disregard him, as like, walk out of his lectures and just be so - like blatant disrespect.*

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<sup>45</sup> 'Hear' is used in BSAE, and also by many of the speakers, to mean 'understand' in terms of language.

However, she does believe that this is mostly the case at UCT, while probably not at other South African universities; UCT is 'snobbish' and 'stuffy', with '*much more pressure to twang and speak English you know properly and whatnot*'.<sup>46</sup>

In terms of 'the twang', F22 discusses her own accent, and people's reactions to it. Her high school was more 'black' than her primary school had been, and so:

F22: *When I got to high school [...] all the black kids were like, shunning me for speaking my English like through the nose.*

Rather than lose her accent, however, she simply switched to speaking more Tswana while at school. However, she also mentions reactions in the present, when in the company of other, black-schooled, black people:

F22: *Some people just offload their issues off you for saying one English word in a twang.*

This is in reference, of course, to the fact that the twang gives away her education, leading to the 'thinking you're better' argument. However, she also mentions another reason why township people - specifically township women - resent her accent; it is the only comment of its kind, but if true, it shows another aspect of the 'power' of the twang:

F22: *In the township [...] there's a bit of a cycle [...] You go to the model C school, and everyone else goes to the township school. And then, the guys like the girls who go to the model C schools coz they speak so well - and they dump their township girlfriends for the model C girls. [...] During like the school holidays you know, like varsity kids come back home and things like that, and the hostility in the air! Coz my town is a very small town you know, so I mean if like - unfamiliar face and like you're young, like wearing a UCT top, [...] people just grab their men closer and [acts it out]. There's such resentment towards us.*

What this mysterious and powerful accent is, is the subject of the next chapter.

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<sup>46</sup> However, they are not really resentful of the 'snob' factor, since they both comment on how proud wearing a UCT sweater at home makes them feel.

## **Chapter 4: Linguistic Analysis**

### **4. The probable nature of ‘the twang’: general considerations**

The previous chapter explains that, although references to their own accents are few, many of the speakers identify their own (or others’) English speech as being, or perhaps rather having, ‘a/the twang’ (see 3.11). What they mean by this is the subject of this chapter: an analysis of their speech, particularly their vowel systems, in comparison to other varieties of South African English (SAE) which might be presumed to have played a role in the formation of their own accents.

Thus in examining what the ‘twang’ consists of, to begin with we must of course consider the likely influences on the speakers’ English accents. Although the various sociolects to which the speakers have likely been exposed are more fully examined below, here I would like to begin with some general premises, based on the available literature, on the types of variable likely to be present in these speakers’ accents. Additionally, I draw on my own observations of and intuitions about the data: further analysis to either confirm or deny the validity of these intuitions will be provided later; here, however, I wish to begin with my own observations.

Firstly, it must be noted that, as discussed in the previous chapter, it is difficult to classify the speakers as first- or second-language (L1 or L2) English speakers, since although most identify an African language as ‘home language’ (HL), their actual language practices in most cases favour the use of English; and many acknowledge that they are more comfortable speaking English than their HL. It is therefore difficult to decide whether or not their English accents are likely to have been affected by the underlying phonology of their HL, since they are apparently fully bilingual (or even English monolinguals). However, whether or not transfer from the HL is plausible, the fact remains that their parents and extended families have not, in general, had their educational experiences; and therefore are likely to have their own accents strongly influenced by their L1s - in effect, they are likely to be speakers of Black South African English (BSAE) proper. These family - and in the case of township-dwellers, community - networks can therefore be presumed to have, at least potentially, some effect on the speakers’ own accents.

A further consideration regarding the influence of the HL is, of course, the age at which the speakers were first exposed to L1 English. As is generally accepted in the field of second-

language acquisition, the later exposure to the L2 occurred, the more likely it is that speakers will retain some remnants of their original accents. I would therefore presume a higher proportion of BSAE-like variants in direct relation to the age at which exposure to L1 ('white') English occurred; which is generally the age at which the speakers entered the former white education system.

In addition to these considerations, which are mostly related to general patterns of second language acquisition, the central question of identity as expressed via language must be considered. To what extent do the speakers feel themselves to be either 'black' or 'English-speaking'? And more crucially, to what extent do they believe these categories to be mutually exclusive? From comments such as those found in McKinney (2007; see section 1.3), as well as these particular speakers' attitudes as expressed in interviews, it is likely that they (unlike the wider 'black community') are fully comfortable with an identity that encompasses 'English-speaking' as well as 'black'. It is therefore plausible that, in terms of identity expression through accent, they feel no need to employ BSAE variants in their English speech; and moreover are proud of their 'English accents' as indices of their educational advantages and class status. However, the constant threat of the 'coconut accusation' may well temper this attitude, so that there may be some situational variation in their daily interactions.<sup>47</sup> As is discussed below, however, this sort of variation has no reason to appear in interview or particularly in word-list (WL) style - any BSAE-like variants in my word-list data, therefore, must either be somewhat conscious, via family or community orientation; or else be inevitable consequences of late L2 acquisition.

While at least some BSAE influence is possible, then - and certainly, some exists - the majority of the segmental data indicates a WSAE orientation; and considering both the influences on and the attitudes of the speakers being considered, this is not surprising. They have been schooled in an environment where 'proper' English, meaning a (fairly conservative) white L1 variety, is prized above all else, and they do not dispute the importance of this variety. The work of Makoe (2007: 62) demonstrates how, in a particular primary school, this attitude towards English is produced, such that 'the discourses concerning English position those children who do not display English language resources as

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<sup>47</sup> As purely anecdotal data, I must add that I have sometimes heard on UCT Upper Campus 3-way code-switching between BSAE, 'Model C' English, and a Bantu language, this last obviously depending on the HL of the speaker and audience.

being somewhat deficient [...] The school, as an institution, also endorses the notion of ‘good English’. Thus the children are ‘socialised into the worldview that English is the natural order’ (2007: 68). It is hardly surprising, then, that the learners emerge from such an environment speaking more English than their HL, and valuing a ‘white’ English accent as a prestigious marker of their education and social position. McKinney (2007: 21) writes of identity construction in white-schooled black learners that ‘they have far more opportunities and space to play with their identities, and to perform these in different ways [compared to previous generations]’; and that among the ‘identity-building resources’ on which they can draw, is ‘access to high levels of proficiency in English (as well as to a particular brand of ‘model C’ English) and in African languages’. They are therefore highly aware of the social implications of speaking a ‘white’ or ‘model C’ variety of English, both positive and negative - negative since the threat of the ‘coconut accusation’ is ever-present. This notion of playing with and performing identities naturally applies also to their language use, and it is likely that at different times they might draw on the various dialects and accents of English to which they have been exposed, as well as (varieties of) their HL. As above, however, this is unlikely to emerge in WL style, or even in the unstructured interviews with a white, English-monolingual, researcher.

Among other possible influences on their English accents, we must also consider the potential role of television and films, as well as music, to which they are exposed. Although such media are not always accepted as linguistic influences<sup>48</sup>, it is nonetheless important to note that some speakers describe ‘the twang’ as being ‘American’, and thus the only possible source of such features to South African youth must be the media. In addition to this, Hartmann and Zerbian (2009) found considerable rhoticity among their research subjects, all black university students. Since rhoticity does not traditionally occur in Black or White South African English (SAE), but ‘can be considered an Americanism’, they ask:

Is the American accent considered prestige due to the values represented by the United States, or is it due to the fact that the American accent is a readily accessible and familiar accent that would allow speakers to distinguish themselves from other English-speaking groups in South Africa? (2009: 143)

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<sup>48</sup> Da Silva (2007) also raises the possibility of media influence on certain vowels in her ‘lect 2’, spoken largely by black informants.

They give no clear answer<sup>49</sup>; but it nonetheless seems that postvocalic /r/ is an emerging feature of the English spoken, particularly, by young black females from affluent backgrounds - the same demographic to which the majority of my speakers belong. Indeed, in my own data there are several instances of postvocalic /r/, in WL, reading passage and interview style; but, as Hartmann and Zerbian discovered, there is less of it in more formal styles, so in my data it occurs most frequently in interview style. Although my focus is primarily on the vowels of their accents, the issue of rhoticity is briefly discussed below (see 4.11).

Aside from rhoticity itself, the possibility of a more general American influence on the vowel system must be considered; if speakers are adopting one 'American' feature, they could conceivably be using more. Hartmann and Zerbian (2009) mention that radio DJs on the stations favoured by their informants show American influence not only in their rhoticity but also in utilising the PALM/BATH split characteristic of General American English (as in Wells, 1982; see 4.1 below) and in having, they claim, generally lower vowels than white SAE. However, while this possible influence must be taken into account, as an initial observation I find no sign of American influence on the vowel systems in my data. Da Silva (2007) suggests she may have detected some American influence on the PRICE and MOUTH vowels among her (black) informants, but the evidence is inconclusive; and the influence could simply be from WSAE (Mesthrie, 2010, pers. com).

These three linguistic varieties, then - WSAE, BSAE, and a rhotic, probably American, variety - are the most likely input for my speakers' accents. However, it is unlikely that they will emerge as clear-cut exemplars of any one, or even necessarily a merger of them all; if, as McKinney (2007) suggests, this group of young people are building new identities for themselves - ones which were unavailable to previous generations - then they are very likely to be developing a new kind of accent. Da Silva's (2007) examination of the English of students, both black and white, at the University of the Witwatersrand, suggests that a lect which she labels lect 2 (her lect 1 representing almost exclusively white speakers) seems to be highly variable and makes use of features from both WSAE and BSAE, as well as, she suggests, some new variants which do not occur in either variety. She found that this lect correlates partially with an educational background similar to that of my informants; and

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<sup>49</sup> It should be noted that, if an 'American' orientation is valid, it cannot be a 'black American' (African American Vernacular English) model, since this variety too is non-rhotic - see Labov, Ash and Boberg, 2006.

argues that it may represent a new, emerging variety of SAE (or what she calls, slightly awkwardly, English-Speaking South African English). Hartmann and Zerbian (2009) too, following Mesthrie and da Silva, argue that the variety of English emerging from this demographic is likely to be something new; neither the original 'white' nor 'black' variety, but something moving away from both of them. Mesthrie (2010, pers. com.) adds that in his opinion, it seems more likely that the variety is moving radically away from BSAE, but not as radically from middle class WSAE.

As a general impression, my own data – from listening to informal conversation in interviews if not in the word-list data - support this theory in that the speech of my informants, even among the most 'white-exposed' is not necessarily identical to any variety of White SAE (WSAE); nor does it show strong influence from Black SAE (BSAE), at least segmentally. However, I would suggest that in my word-list data there are many of da Silva's lect 1 (still largely 'white') features, despite the fact that all my informants are in fact black.

The segmental data will be fully discussed below; however, here there are some other features that I feel are important to mention. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse them fully, impressionistically, there are clearly two matters which also affect the speech of my informants: voice quality, and intonation pattern and/or timing. While I am no expert in voice quality and so unable to describe the nature of this quality, there seems to be, more strongly in some speakers than others, a particular voice quality that, even were the speakers segmentally identical to 'white' speakers of WSAE, would indicate their 'racial' background. How conscious or otherwise this is, I cannot say, but as an identifying feature it is noticeable to me, and deserving of future research. I should however add that a largely informal experiment on a racially mixed group of UCT students, in order to determine their ability to recognise this quality and determine the 'race' of the speaker, was inconclusive. Nonetheless, to myself and other linguists who have heard the data, this quality exists; and hopefully in later work I or another researcher will be able to describe what it is. I have been unable to find any literature on general Bantu-language voice quality, and therefore cannot even speculate as to whether or not it is an HL transference feature.

The matter of timing is less obvious, and again though even more pronouncedly, only noticeable in some of the speakers. However, where it does exist, it is clear that the patterns are noticeably different from those of WSAE speakers. Again, it would take further analysis



to determine whether or not this is a transferred feature from the speakers' HLs, but this does seem the most likely source; and I intend to consider the matter in future. The Southern Bantu languages are generally considered to be syllable-timed (see Zerbian and Barnard, 2008), and this may be the source of this pattern; however, further analysis is required to establish just what the connection is.

Before turning to the literature on the various SAE dialects, there is a further study which is highly relevant to this data, particularly since most of the 'black' subjects in the study are a sub-set of my own speakers, and since this thesis is part of Mesthrie's broader project (see Chapter 1). Mesthrie (2008; 2010) investigates the GOOSE vowel in the four main 'racial' groups in South Africa (black, white, coloured and Indian).<sup>50</sup> While his results are discussed below (see 4.4), here it is important to note that the qualities of this vowel were traditionally racially distributed, such that a back vowel was (and in many cases still is) a BSAE variant, while a much fronter variant was associated with WSAE. Thus Lass (1995: 98-99) noted that, with respect to GOOSE-fronting in WSAE:

This central-to-front quality is an ethnic as well as a social marker; it is (on anecdotal evidence at least) perceived by black speakers as peculiarly 'white'.

While this is undoubtedly still the case in the general black population, the recent class changes and emergence of 'white-school' educated black youth, such as my and Mesthrie's informants, have seemingly resulted in the fronter GOOSE values being adopted by this sector of the black population. Mesthrie's data indicates that black females, in particular, are now fronting the GOOSE vowel to a considerable extent, and therefore it seems that this marker is no longer used by speakers as a racial one, but rather, perhaps, as a marker of the newly 'integrated' middle class. It is important to bear this in mind in considering the data: if the fronting of the GOOSE vowel is now a marker of this new middle class composition, then it would follow that a front GOOSE indicates not only class, but concomitantly, exposure to former white schools and thus L1 WSAE accents. If this is the case, then a fronted GOOSE may well be an indication that speakers are also likely to have adopted other of the more advanced features of WSAE; this is taken up again in 4.7 below.

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<sup>50</sup> As previously indicated, these were the four groups in apartheid classification; and the segregation of the groups resulted in 4 distinct ethnolects. Despite the lifting of apartheid, the groups remain, except possibly in the middle classes; and most - but not all - South Africans accept racial classification as part of their identities.

Before turning to the examination of the data, it is necessary to describe the precise nature of the two varieties of South African English (WSAE and BSAE) which are likely to have provided the main input to my speakers' English accents. Section 4.2 therefore provides the main descriptions of WSAE from the literature, while 4.3 deals with descriptions of BSAE. In addition, Mesthrie's (2010) discussion of the GOOSE vowel is more thoroughly dealt with, as well as da Silva's (2007) descriptions of her lects 1 and 2 (as mentioned above), in sections 4.4 and 4.5. Firstly, however, because it is the system most frequently used in the literature to discuss the L1 varieties, and has already been briefly referred to, Wells' (1982) notion and use of 'standard lexical sets' must be explained.

#### **4.1 Wells' (1982) Standard Lexical Sets**

Wells (1982) developed the use of standard lexical sets in order to denote the classes of English vowel found in each set. Thus GOOSE, as a vowel class, denotes all vowels which rhyme with the vowel in GOOSE, whatever their actual phonetic properties. The system is thus very useful for representing a specific vowel class without prejudice as to its actual quality; and has been used successfully in the literature describing (W)SAE, and I thus continue to use it in this thesis.

Each Wells' class, therefore, denotes the class of words in an English dialect which have the same phonetic property. Thus when, below, I refer to the LOT or CLOTH vowel, I am referring to the vowels occurring in the sets represented by these words. Also, as this particular example suggests, there may not be a contrast in the dialect in question between two of the sets, since they have been chosen to represent as many varieties of English as possible. In LOT and CLOTH, for example, there is no evidence that WSAE shows any differentiation.

These sets are therefore, with some slight modification where contrasts do not exist, widely used in describing the nature of English vowel systems, and continue to be used throughout this thesis.

Unfortunately, it was only learnt after the data had been collected, that some of Wells' words are not ideal for acoustic analysis; however, by then it was too late to change them.

## **4.2 White South African English (WSAE)**

Empirical research into the phonetic properties of WSAE has not been extensive, but the standard description now is that provided in Lass (1995; 2002). The most recent description of the variety is, however, that provided by Bekker, who conducted a word-list (WL<sup>51</sup>) acoustic analysis of WSAE as spoken by 27 ‘white females between the ages of 18 and 19 from a variety of urban centres in South Africa and from the higher end of the socioeconomic scale’ (2009: 105). It is these two descriptions, therefore, that form the basis of my discussion of the accent type. For a more thorough treatment of the literature on WSAE, see Bekker’s 2009 or da Silva’s 2007 theses on the subject: for my purposes, I am less interested in the historical literature than in the synchronic state of what is presumed to be the major input dialect for my speakers’ accents.

Lass’s (1995) description of WSAE notes first of all that the variety is historically a Southern British variety of English, and therefore shares features with related varieties. The most prominent of these is the existence of [ə] or a higher vowel in TRAP; a distinction between the BATH and TRAP vowels; a lengthening of BATH before voiceless fricatives and sometimes /nt/ or /ns/; more recently a lengthening of TRAP before voiced stops and nasals (with the exception of /N/); and a distinction between STRUT and FOOT.

In addition to these shared features of the vowel system, Southern British English (SBE) offshoots tend to share a development pattern whereby they occur as three lectal types, socially distributed and ‘typically perceived by speakers as hierarchically ranked’ (1995: 93). In WSAE, these were first described by Lanham (1967, 1978); and Lanham and MacDonald (1979) labelled them as ‘Conservative’, ‘Respectable’ and ‘Extreme’. Lass (1995) uses their terminology unwillingly, and in response to his comments Bekker (2009) has taken up the labels used by Mitchell & Delbridge (1965) in classifying Australian English, thus referring to Cultivated, General and Broad SAE. Whatever terminology is used, however, the 3 types are generally agreed to be class based:

*Conservative/Cultivated:* Upper middle class; least distinguishable from Southern English and close to RP.

*Respectable/General:* ‘middle class’; the new local standard; range of accent types.

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<sup>51</sup> Note that Bekker’s (2009) decision to use WL data, for reasons related to the laboratory standards he required for recording and analysis, partly motivated my own, in making the data sets comparable.

*Extreme/Broad*: lower socio-economic status; Afrikaans descent; particularly males

(Paraphrased from Lass, 1995: 93-94; cf Bekker 2009)

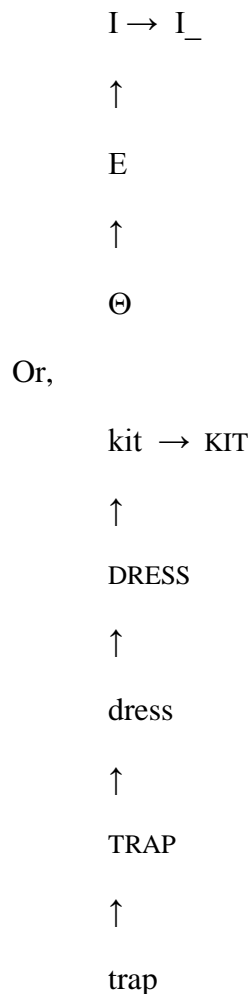
I have chosen to use the newer terminology, referring to speakers or features as Cultivated (C), General (G) or Broad (B).

The discussion of the vowels of the various lexical sets below, therefore, is divided into vowel types as they occur in each of these lects, with further discussion of those more recently identified by Bekker (2009) as belonging to General SAE. Although I will not analyse the vowels of every lexical set in my own data, I nonetheless describe all of them for the sake of completeness; my narrowed focus will be justified in 4.10.

#### **4.2.1 Short front vowels**

The status of the short front vowels of WSAE (TRAP, DRESS and KIT) has recently come under scrutiny in Bekker's 2010 thesis; this will be discussed below. Here, however, I will begin with the generally accepted description, plus Bekker's proposed recent changes, before moving on in 4.6.2.1 to some of my qualifications regarding them.

The pattern of the short front vowels involves a development from the SBE from which SAE is descended; although there is evidence that the origins of the changes may lie in the speech of the early British settlers (see Lass 1995). However, in relation to some earlier and many current varieties, WSAE appears to have undergone a raising chain shift in this vowel series, such that the TRAP and DRESS vowels have been raised, while KIT, as a result, has been forced to (partially) centralise. Thus original / $\Theta$ / has raised towards [E], and /E/ towards [ $\epsilon$ ], forcing most of /I/ to centralize towards [I $_{\text{c}}$ ]. Lass (1995: 96) provides two diagrams representing the shift; in the second, the lower case words represent the older values, while the upper case represent the newer SAE ones:



**Figure 1: Short front vowel raising in (W)SAE (source: Lass, 1995)**

The partial nature of this KIT change is what Wells (1982) first described as the KIT-split: unlike any other known variety of L1 English, WSAE has developed a distribution whereby the KIT vowel occurs as two main variants according to phonetic environment<sup>52</sup>. The centralised variant of the KIT vowel, i.e. [ɪ] or even approximating [↔], does not occur in certain environments: i.e. initially; after [h]; or in the environment of a velar consonant (whether preceding or following). Thus *it*, *kit*, *hit*, and *sing* contain the same vowel, as do *sit*, *bit* and *nib*; but the two sets do not match one another. Although the three ‘class’ lects have differing distributions of this vowel, it is nonetheless a categorical indicator of non-Cultivated SAE. Across the lects the distribution is as follows:

	<i>it</i>	<i>sit</i>
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<sup>52</sup> See Bekker (2009) for a discussion of the literature, as well as a recent take, on the allophonic versus phonemic status of the two types.

C	[ɪ]	[ɪ]
G	[ɪ]	[ɪ_]
B	[ɪ]	[ɪ_]

In addition to the above-mentioned environments, there are also some lexical exceptions, such that the pattern is not always clear-cut; and over and above these, there are further differences in that in Broad SAE, and some General, there is further retraction before syllable-final /ʌ/ and after /ɔ/. This retraction draws some of the KIT class into a near merger with the FOOT set, so that *will/wool*; *bill/bull*; *woman/women* become near-homophonic. Furthermore, in Broad this retraction may operate before and after /f/; *fit/foot* become near homophonic (Lass, 1995: 96-97).

Bekker (2009) refines the distribution of KIT in his General SAE data, identifying six environments which are likely to influence the variant of KIT produced:

Variant	Environment	Examples
KIT1	disyllabic	<i>city, silly</i>
KIT2	//_; h_; velar_; _velar/	<i>sing, hid, kit, it</i>
KIT3	/_palato-alveolar/	<i>bitch, dish, fish</i>
KIT4	unmarked	<i>chin, sit</i>
KIT5	/l_; r_/; near bilabials	<i>rid, bit, lit, limp</i>
KIT6	/w_; _l/	<i>till, with, fill, pill</i>

Bekker's analysis, however, suggests that not all of these environments are equally influential in predicting a phonetic variant of KIT; KIT4 and KIT5, for example, overlap. KIT1, the variant in disyllabic KIT words, is relatively high compared to the others, but all variants including this are lower than KIT in RP. For KIT2 and KIT3, there is some overlap between the two categories; but while KIT2 partially overlaps with DRESS but is slightly backer, KIT3 is more centralized. The backest variant is KIT6, which shows some overlap with FOOT (see 4.6.3 below).

Thus although the distribution of KIT variants is complex, as well as unevenly spread across the three sociolects, the general pattern of the chain shift seems to remain: the raising of TRAP and DRESS, so that DRESS impinged on the KIT vowel space, resulted in a shift in the position of KIT such that, having little further room to move, the majority of the set was forced into centralisation.

The raising of these vowels, and the subsequent KIT-split, has never been contested, and the short front vowel raising shift, with the unique KIT-split, has been seen as a primary characteristic of the variety. This makes Bekker's (2009) claims all the more startling: based partially on his own data and partially on analogy with Torgerson and Kerswill's (2004) recent evidence for the South-East English short vowel chain shift; and reinforced by Trudgill's (2004) notion of 'drift' in related language varieties, he claims to have found evidence that this raising shift is now in reverse. In effect, he believes he has uncovered evidence of a lowering shift in WSAE, parallel to that now occurring (as above) in the South-East of England. In his own data, the TRAP vowel appears lowered, and despite no evidence of lowering DRESS or KIT, he believes that the lowered TRAP is a sign of an imminent chain shift in the opposite direction to the original 'South African chain shift' (see Lass and Wright, 1985; 1986).

This claim will be more fully discussed later (see 4.6.2.1), in comparison with my own speakers' TRAP vowels; here, it is important to note that a lowered TRAP has been reported in General SAE. This may or may not be reflected in my own data; if it is it would suggest that my speakers are following their white peers, while its absence could indicate a divergence. The lack of a lowered TRAP in my data, however, could also suggest that Bekker's value for this vowel is erroneous, if we assume that my speakers are speakers of General SAE. This discussion will be taken up again below.

Bekker (2009) also notes that in his data, as a result of the apparent lowering of TRAP, there is a slight overlap in the standard deviations of his TRAP and STRUT classes; and he again relates this to the potential SECS-like shift: however, he notes that apart from the slight overlap, STRUT remains fully front, and has not yet retracted under pressure from the lowered TRAP.

To return to the original South African chain shift, however, Lass (1995: 97-98) notes that the value of the DRESS vowel, raised to a high mid front [e], is not an important social marker; but in the non-Cultivated lects (G and B), there seems to be differentiation by gender, so that females tend to have a higher value than males. Additionally, this female value may also centralise, so that it approaches the fronter allophones of KIT. Before /l/, B SAE may have a preceding /j/, particularly initially and after [h]; while in both G and B, it tends to lower before /l/, to the region of [E] or even [ə].

Bekker's (2009) acoustic analysis also shows DRESS to be a close front vowel, and confirms Lass' (1995) description of a partial overlap with the fronter allophones of KIT (what he classifies as KIT2; i.e. the *it*, *hit*, *kit* type vowels). However, while Lass describes this overlap as being the result of DRESS centralisation by young female R/G speakers, Bekker's analysis suggests that it is the result of the fronting of KIT2 rather than the centralisation of DRESS that accounts for this overlap. In any case, some overlap between part of KIT and much of DRESS is accepted as typical of G SAE.

In the case of TRAP, Lass (1995: 98) describes it as an important social marker, distinguishing between C and G on the one hand, and B on the other. The first 2 have an [Θ]-like value, though often higher than that of RP; while B has a quality approaching [E]. As with DRESS, it lowers and retracts before dark /l/. Bekker, as mentioned above, gives a lowered TRAP for his data, which he sees as the initiating move in a potential lowering chain shift.

#### **4.2.2 The remaining short vowels**

For the remainder of the vowel system, Bekker's (2009) study mostly bears out Lass's analysis, while providing additional material in the form of acoustic values. Thus for LOT, Lass (1995) describes it as a 'short, rather open and usually weakly rounded back vowel', which often centralises to a position near [ɔ̃]. However, for younger Cape Town and Natal R speakers, he adds that the vowel seems to have undergone further raising and unrounding, in the region of [ø]. Bekker's (2009) study of young, female R/G speakers from around the country finds that it remains a somewhat low back vowel, without raising in comparison to the RP quality, but with some evidence of centralisation.

The STRUT vowel is described by Lass (1995: 98) as a weak social marker, with values fluctuating between low central and centralised front half-close, so that the norm is a central open [æ] to [ã]. He suggests that the backer and opener values are more common among C and older G speakers, while young G speakers, particularly females, have the fronter and higher values, going as far as [Ẽ]. Bekker's young female speakers thus have values close to his TRAP vowel, remaining fronter than LOT as well as fronted in comparison with RP.

For FOOT, Lass finds little social variation, with most varieties having a short, centralised half-close back [Y]. However, younger, especially female, G speakers again may have a fronter value, approximating a lowered [←̃]. Bekker's (2009) work on young female G



speakers bears this out, with FOOT described as front; he also suggests that there may be slight diphthongisation of FOOT such that it glides to an even fronter position. In comparison with the data for Torgerson and Kerswill's (2004) SECS-shift, he finds that FOOT is somewhat lowered; but this accords with Lass's (1995) description of it as high-mid.

### **4.2.3 Long vowels**

Lass (1995) and Bekker (2009) both find that FLEECE, unlike many other Southern English varieties, retains a long monophthong [i:] in all varieties, and is therefore not socially significant.

The NURSE vowel, however, does have sociolinguistic significance in that it marks a distinction between C, and the other varieties. Lass (1995) provides a mid-central, unrounded vowel in C which is similar to that of RP, having a quality in the region of [ɛ:]. However, in G and B, NURSE is 'rounded, usually half-close centralised front [O\_:]' or slightly lower (1995: 98). Bekker (2009) considers that a close front rounded NURSE is an indicator of General SAE among his young female speakers of this lect. He notes that it is higher than GOAT (see below), on a par with DRESS and SQUARE. He confirms Lass' (1995) conclusion that the G value for NURSE is around [O\_:].

GOOSE is also an important social variable within White SAE, as well as its recent prominence in the speech of young black speakers. In C, it is fairly back, in the region of [u:], but in the other varieties it is never backer than [ʊ:]. Additionally, young, particularly female, G speakers may front GOOSE as far as [y:], but 'with 'compressed' rather than 'pouted' lip-rounding' (Lass, 1995: 98). Lass explains that 'the higher up the Respectable [General] scale, and the younger the speaker, the fronter the vowel' (98). As mentioned in section 4, Lass also comments on the fact that a central or front GOOSE is apparently an ethnic marker of 'whiteness'. That this is beginning to change has been demonstrated by Mesthrie (2010): see above in 4 and below in 4.4.

Bekker's (2009) young, female General SAE speakers may then be expected to have a central or fronted GOOSE, and perhaps even as far front as [y:]. His findings for this group largely confirm Lass's analysis: a fronted GOOSE is seen as an indicator of General SAE, below the level of consciousness (at least among white speakers). He also notes the coarticulatory effects of a preceding /j/, which results in further fronting.

THOUGHT, according to Lass (1995), is of slight sociolinguistic importance in that it again separates C from the other varieties: C has an opener vowel in the region of [ɔ:], while G and B have a half-high [o:]. Lass (1995: 99) also mentions the variability between a THOUGHT and a LOT vowel, when followed by a voiceless fricative, so that ‘different speakers may have quite different distributions’ in words such as *off, soft, cloth, wrath, loss, Austria, Austen*. Wells (1982) reserves a separate lexical set for these, calling them the CLOTH vowels; and Lass claims that the more conservative the variety in SAE, the less likely speakers are to have THOUGHT in this set.

Bekker (2009), for his G speakers, also provides a THOUGHT value of [o:]. Interestingly, he finds that for his young G speakers, the contrast between LOT and THOUGHT appears to be one of length only: qualitatively, both are very similar.

Lass’s final long monophthong, BATH, is also socially significant. Again, it separates C from the other varieties, so that C has a centralised back quality around [A\_:], or even central [æ:], while in G and B it is backer. Thus it may occur as fully back [A:] in G, and is usually backer in male and younger speakers. In B, it can occur as round [ɒ:] or even raise towards [ɔ:], which gives rise to a popular stereotype of B speakers (1995: 99). However, Lass notes that there is some evidence that weak rounding, at least, may no longer be as stigmatised as previously. Bekker’s (2009) data indicates a mid back vowel among his young female G speakers, suggesting that some BATH raising may have entered G speech, at least among females.

#### **4.2.4 Diphthongs**

Although my own analysis of the diphthongs in my data is less detailed than that for the simple vowels, I nonetheless include Lass’ (1995) and Bekker’s (2009) analyses of all the diphthongs for the sake of completeness.

FACE is an important social marker; Lass (1995) describes it as differentiating between C and G on the one hand, and B on the other. Thus both C and G may have an RP-like [eɪ], while B has a lowered and often retracted onset, so that the values may range from [EI] to [α\_I] to [øI]. Thus the closer the onset is to STRUT, the more Broad the variety.

However, within the General variety there is further differentiation: younger, usually female, speakers may have a very short, and peripheral and open, second element within the [eI] FACE diphthong, so that it comes near to monophthongisation. On the other hand, male speakers of less standard varieties of G may have an opener onset, yielding [EI] or even [ΘI], and thus approaching the B values.

Bekker's young female G speakers could therefore be expected to have the near monophthong, or at least a very short and peripheral second element, in FACE. In fact, he finds that his speakers do indeed have a weak glide in the second element, so that 'all in all, the data provides support for Lass' (1990) transcription of this vowel for his (female) subjects' (2009). Thus he notes that the onset of his speakers' FACE is lower than their DRESS vowel, gliding to just above DRESS but not overlapping with the fronter KIT values.

PRICE and MOUTH are also sociolinguistically significant, according to Lass (1995), and are involved in a complex relationship such that Wells (1982) refers to the PRICE/MOUTH crossover in several English varieties, including Broad SAE. In this variety, the PRICE/MOUTH crossover involves a change in the first elements of PRICE and MOUTH, such that the first and second elements no longer agree in backness in either one: front-gliding PRICE has a back onset, yielding [aI], while MOUTH has a front onset but a backwards-moving glide, i.e. [ΘY]. This is in contrast to the C and G varieties: for these, where the crossover does not occur, both usually have [aI] for PRICE and something near [AY] for MOUTH - i.e. the onset and second element generally agree in backness. For younger G speakers, the second element may be unrounded (Lass, 1995).

Further, unlike in C, most G tends to monophthongise both PRICE and MOUTH, and so producing [a:] for PRICE and [A:] for MOUTH. Further complicating the picture is the fact that there may be covariation within each speaker between this monophthongised MOUTH, and BATH (see above). However, Lass (1995: 99) states that the two do not merge: MOUTH is usually higher and fronter than BATH.

This monophthongisation of PRICE and MOUTH in General SAE is nonetheless non-categorical; and is more common for PRICE than MOUTH. Lass believes its presence is

influenced by speech tempo and register, so that the faster or more casual the speech, the more likely the monophthongisation. One obvious corollary of this can then be expected to be the non-appearance, in word-list data such as that of Bekker (2009), of monophthongised PRICE and MOUTH; and indeed this is the case for Bekker's data (see below).

In B, like G, monophthongisation is more common in PRICE than MOUTH, and indeed MOUTH rarely monophthongises; but a monophthongised PRICE correlates with the rounded BATH (see above). However, Lass maintains that the two usually remain distinct. A further feature of PRICE/MOUTH for some types of B is the occurrence of a triphthong in MOUTH, involving a palatal onglide, such that especially after /n/ and /h/, it occurs as [jɵY].

A final point regarding the PRICE/MOUTH variables is made in a footnote by Lass (1995). He notes that in some G speakers, and particularly males, there is some crossover, such that the first element of MOUTH may be [a], with that of PRICE a centralised back vowel, but still fronter than that of BATH.

Bekker's (2009) analysis of the word-list style speech of his young G SAE speakers confirms Lass' analysis that monophthongisation of PRICE and MOUTH is related to speech tempo; in word-list style it does not occur among his speakers. Thus although MOUTH has a weak glide, it is not monophthongised; and PRICE, too, while showing some glide-weakening, is equally still diphthongal.

For the CHOICE diphthong, there seems to be no significant variation; Lass (1995) describes it as having a first element slightly lower than the speaker's THOUGHT, and the second as the higher variant of KIT. Bekker (2009) confirms that there is no evidence of glide-weakening, but finds that the diphthong begins just in front of THOUGHT, rather than lower as Lass (1995) claims. The second element glides to somewhere higher than DRESS, thus largely confirming Lass' claim.

GOAT, however, is another significant marker: for C, Lass (1995: 100) provides a diphthong gliding to [Y], with a first element of either a centralised half-open [E] or unrounded mid-central [↔], or front and centralised with rounding. As general C values then, Lass gives [EY] or [↔Y].

However, in G varieties, an unrounded first element does not occur, and the lip-rounding is stronger, so that the normal onset is [ɹ]. The second element, if monophthongisation does not occur, may be in the vicinity of [ʊ] or unrounded [ɔ̃]. However monophthongisation is common, especially among younger speakers, although it does not seem to be linked to gender - unlike many other G features in which young women have taken the lead. This monophthongisation can lead to an apparent near-merger with NURSE; there is a minimal contrast between [Õ] and [ɹ:] but this may not always be discernible to outsiders (Lass, 1995: 100).

For B varieties, GOAT usually has an unrounded and retracted first element, close to STRUT, providing a back-gliding counterpart to front-gliding FACE, as [ɤ̃Y].

Bekker's (2009) data confirm Lass' (1995) analysis of the G value, in showing a rounded mid onset [ɹ] and a centralised offglide [ʊ] or unrounded [ɔ̃]. He also finds that the onset is lowered and more centralised in relation to NURSE, around [Õ].

SQUARE provides another case of a clear distinction between C and the other two varieties: C speakers typically retain a diphthong of an [E↔] type, while in G and B it is usually monophthongised - and more so in B than in G. Thus most G, and almost all B, has a monophthong, usually somewhat higher than the onset of the C diphthong. In older G the diphthong is sometimes retained; if not, a long [E:] occurs. Younger G speakers, and most B speakers, have a closer monophthong of an [e:] type; in some B it may be even closer, approaching but not merging with FLEECE. Thus for these speakers, a minimal contrast by length occurs between DRESS and SQUARE. Lass (1995: 100) notes that this is socially a highly salient feature, with the use of a monophthong heavily stigmatised even by those whose speech includes one.

Bekker's (2009) speakers show a small spectral movement in SQUARE, but he attributes this to coarticulatory effects rather than the presence of a diphthong. He finds the vowel to be relatively high, overlapping with DRESS, so that the two are distinguished by length; thus confirming Lass' conclusions regarding young G speakers.

The NEAR diphthong is sociolinguistically uninteresting, having generally an [I↔] quality; although some B speakers may monophthongise it to [I:] (Lass, 1995). Bekker finds some variation within his speakers, but generally characterises this as a diphthong beginning front and close and gliding to [↔], in young female G speakers.

The final diphthong described for SAE is CURE, which for Lass (1995) demonstrates an age-graded variability indicative of an impending merger between CURE and THOUGHT. Thus Lass (1995: 100) notes that while most older speakers of SAE in general retain an [Y↔] diphthong, many younger speakers of particularly G and B have the same quality as their THOUGHT in, for example, *sure*, so that the phrase *for sure* rhymes. However, the distinction is maintained in CURE words beginning (Consonant)/j/\_, such as *fury*, *pure*, and *cure* itself. Lass notes that the social significance of this merger is not yet clear, although it is inevitable that it will become stigmatised by C speakers at some point.

Bekker's (2009) young female G speakers, however, retain a clear glide from a high central vowel to schwa; this may be related to the fact that his data is in citation form.

This, then, is the general picture of SAE presented in the literature. In general, Lass (1995) and Bekker (2009) are in agreement regarding the phonetic values of most vowels for young, mostly female, General speakers; it therefore remains to be seen to what extent my own speakers resemble this group. Before turning to this, however, there is more information concerning other relevant varieties of SAE that must be considered.

#### **4.3 Black South African English (BSAE)**

Although it seems unlikely that Black South African English (BSAE) - essentially a second language variety - would have much influence on the speech of my own research subjects, it is nonetheless important to describe the vowel system, if only to illustrate the extent to which my speakers diverge from it. The phonology of BSAE is generally accepted as resulting from transfer from the first language of its speakers, and therefore the vowel system would mirror that of either the Nguni language family or the Sotho. However, Van Rooy and van Huyssteen (2000: 19) note that 'available research indicates that there is little difference

between the vowel pronunciation of BSAE speakers with different first languages'; and their acoustic research concluded that the Tswana English speakers in their data sample essentially had a 5 vowel system. Using Wells' (1982) lexical sets as vowel classes, they found the following (Van Rooy and Van Huyssteen, 2000: 20):

<b>Lexical set</b>	<b>Tswana-English results</b>
STRUT	[α] 59%, [A] 32%,
START, BATH, PALM	[α] 40%, [A] 40%
TRAP	[E] 47%, [Θ] 12%, [α] 10%
DRESS	[E] 43%, [e] 29%
NURSE	[E] 47%, [e] 19%
LOT	[□] 70%, [□] 11%
FORCE, THOUGHT, NORTH	[□] 88%
FLEECE	[i] 94%
KIT	[i] 81%
SIT	[i] 50%, [E] 14%
FOOT	[u] 100%
GOOSE	[u] 83%

This is therefore essentially a 5-vowel system mirroring that of the Nguni language family. As already indicated, the speech of my informants shows little, if any, similarity to this system; but it is nonetheless at least possible that some influence of it might remain, at least in certain speakers.

Having described the two historically separate ethnolects, WSAE and BSAE, it is now possible to turn to more recent research examining some of the changes that have taken place in this strict racial/ethnic separation of dialects.

#### **4.4 Mesthrie (2010)**

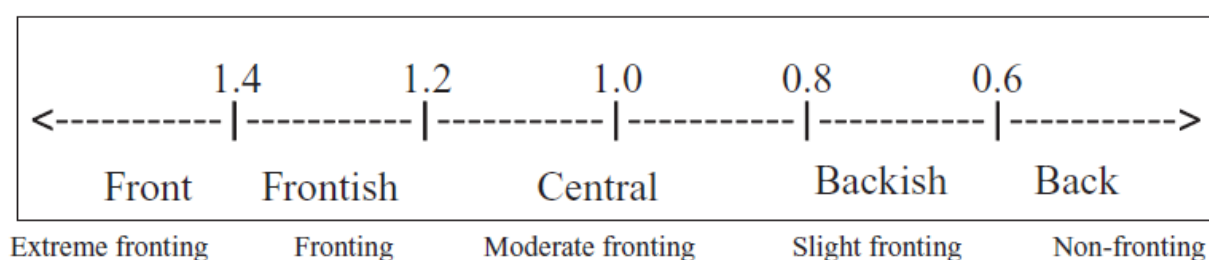
Mesthrie (2010) examines the GOOSE vowel in the middle classes of all four race groups in South Africa, in different phonetic contexts. I deal only with the comparison between white speakers (taking them as a potential model and point of comparison for the black speakers' accents), and black speakers.

His findings support the general consensus that young black middle class speakers, particularly females, are fronting GOOSE to a considerable extent, if not in quite the same pattern as the white speakers. Thus while white speakers tend to front GOOSE more in coronal environments, young black speakers have more variety in the spread of their GOOSE vowels. He also found that in word-list (WL) style the speakers tended to front the vowel more than in reading or interview styles; I can therefore predict greater fronting among my WL data. This finding seems to confirm the idea that fronting is a prestige characteristic, which speakers are more likely to use in more formal contexts.

Mesthrie's GOOSE data shows a definite patterning on the front-back dimension according to phonetic environment (using preceding segment as the relevant environment, in accordance with findings across English varieties internationally). Mesthrie factors all pre-/l/ tokens out of his analysis, since a following /l/ is known to cause retraction in SAE, as in other varieties (however, I retain this for comparison in section 4.13). He also factors out any tokens where /r/ or /l/ precede the GOOSE vowel, since they are known to affect acoustic readings; this leaves three<sup>53</sup> phonetic environments for analysis, determined by preceding consonant – and here ordered from the expected most to least fronting-inducing environment:

1. preceded by /j/ (J-words)
2. preceded by coronal consonants (/t d s z n ʈ ʈ̪ ʈ̪̌ ʈ̪̌̌ ʈ̪̌̌̌ ʈ̪̌̌̌̌/) excluding /r/, /l/ and /j/
3. preceded by non-coronals

Having normalised his GOOSE tokens using the Watt-Fabricius normalisation method, Mesthrie developed a scale by which the normalised GOOSE vowels could be classified along the front-back dimension. He took 1.0 as the central point, as determined by the Watt-Fabricius method, with the frontest value being just over 2.0 and the backest 0.1; he therefore proposed the values as derived from this scale as follows:



<sup>53</sup> Word-initial was excluded, since only one such token occurred in Mesthrie's data.



**Figure 2: Mesthrie's (2010: 15) fronting scale for Watt-Fabrics normalised GOOSE vowels**

Using this scale to determine degrees of frontness, Mesthrie compared the black group with the white, and found that while for both groups, the degree of fronting was patterned according to the phonetic environments above, there were some significant differences. Firstly, the black speakers showed a greater spread of tokens across the fronting scale, compared to the white speakers, although the overall pattern held. Secondly, while for white speakers in the three 'fronting' environments, there were no tokens further back than the midpoint of 1.0 (making all tokens central, frontish or fully front), among the black speakers there was one fully back realization in the non-coronal environment, and two with a backish value – overall, black speakers showed less fronting in the non-coronal environment. In the coronal environment, one black speaker has a backish value, though most speakers have values from central to frontish, with one speaker showing a fully front value; while for white speakers, all values fell in the range of frontish to front. For the preceding /j/ environment (J-words), while all white speakers have values between 1.3 and 1.7 (hence frontish to front, with the majority being fully front), one black speaker has a centralised value. Nonetheless, the majority of black speakers have front or frontish values with J-words, and 8 of the 12 speakers analysed have ratios between 1.4 and 2.0, making this category fully front. In comparing the *goose* token from WL style with the non-coronal category (into which the word *goose* falls), black speakers showed no significant difference between the two, while for white speakers the WL token was fronter.

Overall, then, the white group showed statistically significant more advanced fronting for the non-coronal and coronal categories than the black, but the difference between the J-words for the two groups was not significant. Although less advanced in GOOSE fronting in these two categories than their white counterparts, the black group nonetheless has GOOSE values and distributions which are, as Mesthrie says, a far cry from the fully back BSAE norm.

Gender differentiation in both black and white groups was small, and statistically not significant. Nonetheless, Mesthrie notes that while for the white group, somewhat surprisingly, the males have slightly fronter values, for the black group it is the females who are in the lead, particularly so for the J-words and in WL style. Despite not being statistically significant within either group, it is interesting to note this difference.

Mesthrie's analysis, therefore, indicates the reliability of the preceding consonant as a factor in determining GOOSE-fronting, while also proving the more general premise that such fronting occurs in young black 'Model C' English speakers.

#### **4.5 Da Silva (2007)**

Da Silva (2007) analysed the speech of a group of 76 university students at the University of the Witwatersrand, both black and white, using 'impressionistic' phonetic techniques rather than acoustic (as does Lass (1995 and others), in his analyses of WSAE). As mentioned above, she discovered two main lects among her speakers from the variables she chose to examine. These lects were identified using Principal Components Analysis<sup>54</sup> to find naturally occurring clusters within her data. Her data suggests that her 'lect 2', spoken almost entirely by black students, was much more variable than 'lect 1' (majority white) – which lect she acknowledges conforms very closely to the literature on the characteristics of WSAE/English Speaking South African English (ESSA - her preferred term). Her more interesting finding for my purposes, however, was the fact that among these speakers of lect 1 were a small minority of black speakers. The small number of black students found using this lect (5.56%, in fact 2 speakers), were identified as having attended her 'educational background 1 and 2' schools, which she classified according to a number of factors which closely correlate with 'model C' or private schools. These students, then, can be most closely compared to my own speakers in terms of accent and upbringing. Some lect 2 speakers may also have attended these schools, but their overall speech did not mirror my speakers' usage; although some of the same variants occur, their proportional distribution is very different.

The variants which da Silva identified as strongly representative of lect 1 include, significantly considering its prominence in studies of recent changes in the 'Model C' group's speech, as identified by Mesthrie (2010, above), the variant of GOOSE which she calls GOOSE1 – that is, a fronted GOOSE [↵]. In lect 1, this was in fact found to occur in 97% of the tokens, with her GOOSE2, back [u], thus barely present. The other variants having very high prominence in lect 1, and almost no representation in lect 2, are: [↵→u] for GOAT, [A:] for MOUTH, [II] for NURSE, and [ø] for STRUT. Those with fairly strong representation are [aI] and [eI] for FACE, [↵↔] and [I] for two variants of KIT, and [A:] for PRICE. Thus as she

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<sup>54</sup> This statistical technique is used to identify patterns within a data set; da Silva used it in order to establish whether sets of features occurring in her data set (of phonetic variables) could be found to correlate with factors such as ethnicity and educational background, rather than approaching the data from the point of view of assuming that ethnicity and education affected the particular variants selected

confirms, ‘all the variants [of lect 1] resemble those of ESSA English only’ (2007: 191), and not BSAE. Hence da Silva’s analysis confirms the existence of WSAE/ESSA English as an ethnolect within SAE, while pointing out (as represented by the variety of options in lect 2) the less clear-cut, more varying nature of what was historically recognised as a single variety, BSAE. More relevant to my own research is the presence of even such a small minority of black speakers as part of the ‘ESSA’ lect, however. From da Silva’s description of her lects, and of the educational backgrounds of the speakers of lect 1, it seems clear that the majority of my speakers would fall under this classification – hence far closer to WSAE than even a newly-emerging variety of BSAE.

This suggests that, while speakers of BSAE may be diversifying as changes in lect 2 occur, the ‘Model C’ change has already happened for some young black speakers, and at least in terms of da Silva’s variables, they are speaking lect 1.

#### **4.6 GOOSE fronting across ethnicities: evidence from international studies**

Because the fronting of GOOSE is such an important racial-social variable in General/‘Middle class’ (including ‘Model C’) SAE, it is important to note that GOOSE fronting has been found to occur in many English dialects across the English-speaking world; Mesthrie (2010) provides a useful summary of the phenomenon as it occurs internationally. In brief, GOOSE fronting has, to varying degrees and in varying patterns, been reported in parts of most major English-speaking areas of the world, including the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. As above, the categories that Mesthrie uses to categorise his own data, according to preceding consonant, are those that are considered to be most influential in GOOSE fronting varieties worldwide, and this has frequently been attributed to (phonetic) environmental pressures, such that preceding coronal consonants seem to condition fronting (see, for example, Labov, Ash and Boberg (2006) for a survey of the phenomenon as it occurs across areas of North America).

The majority of these studies focus on so-called ‘Anglo’ English (broadly, L1 varieties of English, usually as spoken by those of historically British descent; from a South African point of view, then, ‘white’ English), who are commonly in the majority ethnolinguistically in these areas. In South Africa, of course, L1 English speakers are also usually white, but are technically in a minority, despite the economic and social power they command in comparison to the (black) majority. Despite this difference, as discussed above, GOOSE

fronting is a recognisable phenomenon in WSAE, bringing it in line with many international changes.

More pertinently to my data, however, a few studies have focussed on the issue of GOOSE fronting (or back vowel fronting more generally) as it occurs across ethnic lines in areas where ‘Anglo’ fronting is common. Again, in the USA, where these studies were carried out, the ethnic communities studied are minority groups, while in South Africa my informants are part of the black majority. However, the comparison remains relevant, in that a sound change recognised as (at least until recently) part of White SAE, and hence to some extent prestigious, appears to have crossed ethnic/racial lines; and have become in this case, a class marker more than a simple race marker.

Fought (1999) illustrates the occurrence of this type of cross-ethnic GOOSE fronting into Chicano English as spoken in California. Her study, however, demonstrates that the ‘meaning’ and sociolinguistic distribution of a fronted GOOSE vowel is determined by the circumstances of the community in which it occurs – as she explains, ‘those social categories that are of particular significance to the specific community being studied’ (p5). Thus her study highlights the fact that while a (‘majority’) sound change such as GOOSE fronting, however conditioned, may be adopted to some extent by another ethnic group, its social distribution is determined by factors specific to that community – and even unknown in the ethnic group in which it apparently originated. In the case of her Chicano California informants, she found that a set of social factors were involved in the distribution of GOOSE fronting. Primarily, the three factors of social class, gender and gang-affiliation interacted, producing patterns that could only be understood in the light of all three of these factors. In short, the gender of the speaker influenced the extent to which gang-affiliation versus social class won out in terms of GOOSE fronting. That is, for non-gang-affiliated women, fronting was significant regardless of class; while only for gang-affiliated women, social class determined the extent of fronting. For men, on the other hand, the gang-affiliation factor was stronger than that of class, such that gang-affiliated men did not front significantly, regardless of class; while for non-gang-affiliated men, class became a relevant factor, with middle class men showing fronting. What this study illustrates, for my purposes, is not merely that GOOSE fronting can and does cross over into ethnic groups which are not historically speakers of L1 English, but also that its distribution within such groups is determined by factors specific to that community. Thus, within my sample of ‘Model C’ educated black speakers, the distribution of fronted GOOSE need not necessarily mirror its distribution in the white community.

Fridland and Bartlett (2006) similarly examine fronting, in their case of several back vowels, within black and white communities in Memphis. Their focus lies on the acoustic properties of phonetic environments as determinants of fronting; but for my purposes, the most relevant result of their analyses lies in the finding that

The uniformity of contextual effects across speakers and groups suggests that there are underlying phonetic and acoustic principles at work, driving the ordered distribution of fronting. Yet, social influences also appear to play a role in the distribution of variants.

(p 19)

Thus, although the black and white groups show degrees of fronting as determined by phonetic environment, the white group appears more advanced in the matter of GOOSE fronting. Thus phonetic factors, while playing a highly significant role, interact with social factors so that, as the authors put it, the degree to which phonetic factors have an influence is ‘triggered by a social motivation to essentially sound like those around you’ (p19).

As with Fought’s (1999) study, then, this emphasises the point that sound changes, when adopted by a new community, do not necessarily proceed in a manner identical to that of the community where they apparently originated - even where phonetic conditioning has an important role to play. Thus for my ‘white-educated’ black South African speakers, although any GOOSE fronting would seem to have originated with the WSAE spoken in their school environment, it is as well to expect that the distribution of the variable may be differently conditioned.

#### **4.7 Data Analysis**

From the above sections we now have a picture of the potential structure of my speakers’ vowel systems: close to WSAE, with (possibly) some influence from BSAE - or some innovations that may not come from either lect; or from AAVE or any other American dialect. We can now turn to a description of the actual word list data itself.

As discussed in Chapter 1, I have chosen to focus on the word list (WL) data, rather than the reading passage or interview-style pronunciations. The rationale behind this decision was

both practical (40+ hours of recording to be analysed in interview style) and principled: I decided that I wanted to focus on the speakers' perceptions of how English 'should be' pronounced, more than on their actual usage in informal style, because I am interested in what varieties of English they are modelling their speech on. In addition, this makes the data more easily comparable with Bekker's (2009) findings, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Mostly, however, the decision was based on the fact that I am concerned with the entire vowel system, rather than specific variables, although some are more significant than others. WL style provides an opportunity to see what speakers believe they are 'aiming for' when speaking in their 'best' accents. In section 4.13 below, I also consider their interview-style GOOSE values; in the future I intend to analyse the variants of all vowels in their informal speech in order to compare it with their most formal style, in terms of the features I identify as important, but for now I am interested in their perceptions of the most 'correct' pronunciations of vowel variables.

#### **4.7.1 Data preparation methodology**

Before considering the data itself, it is necessary to describe the means by which it was recorded, logged and normalised in order to be prepared for such analysis. Mesthrie (2010; see 4.4 above) provides a full description of the methods used in the broader project, and my methodology generally followed these.

The data were recorded using a Marantz PD-60 recorder or, later in the data-collection process, the newer model; and a Rode Microphone Studio Selection NT1-A. In order to prevent the occurrence of list-intonation (see Ladefoged, 2003) in the word list tokens, the informants were presented with each word on a separate piece of paper; and these were roughly shuffled between interviews so that in general the speakers each read the words in a different order<sup>55</sup>. Each token was therefore isolated to prevent any interference between tokens. The earliest interviewees were given only those words occurring in Wells' 1982 standard lexical sets (see 4.1); however, as time went by I added words that seemed to provide potentially interesting environments, so that not all speakers read the same number of words.

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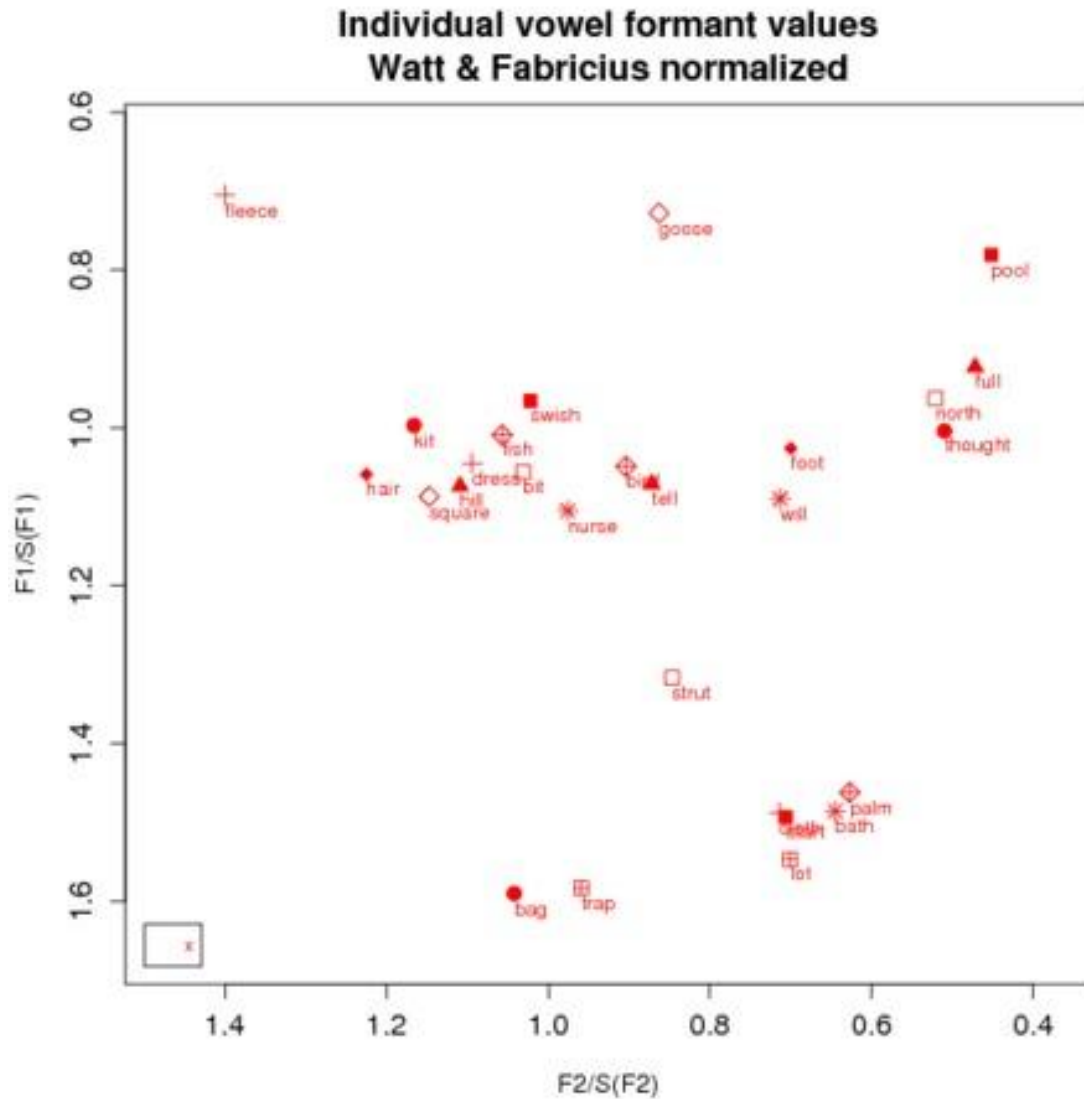
<sup>55</sup> It may be of interest, with reference to their educational experiences, to note that several speakers mentioned that this process reminded them of nightly coaching they had experienced by their parents when learning to read English.

The recorded tokens were then analysed using PRAAT (Boersma, 2001; Boersma and Weenink, 2008). Each vowel was measured across a short and relatively stable section, in order to avoid transition effects; however, see 4.6.2.1 below with reference to the difficulties experienced in this regard for the TRAP tokens. To log the formant readings for each vowel, a PRAAT script was used, which greatly speeded up the logging process. For each token, then, raw Hertz frequencies for F1 and F2 were recorded.

These raw formant values were then normalised in order to minimise the potential effects of differences between individual vocal tract size. The normalisation technique used, on the advice of Paul Foulkes (pers. com), was the ‘Watt-Fabricsius’ method (Watt and Fabricsius, 2003), available on the NORM website (Kendall and Thomas, 2009). Normalised values for F1 and F2 of every token for every speaker were thus provided, and the website was used to generate a vowel chart in normalised vowel-space for each speaker. These charts allowed me an initial opportunity to examine the differences between speakers by eye. The charts plot each vowel by a normalised F1 value on the y-axis, and normalised F2 on the x-axis, such that they resemble a traditional vowel chart. The values of each axis are on average from around 0.2 to 2.2 on the y axis, and 0.2 to 2.0 on the x-axis, with 0 in each case representing the centre point of each speaker’s vowel space as calculated by the Watt-Fabricsius method.

The normalised formant values for each speaker were stored in a database, making it possible to extract easily, for example, a list of all GOOSE vowel values, ranked according to highest-to-lowest F2 - i.e. providing a list of speakers in order of most to least GOOSE fronting. Because GOOSE fronting has become such an important indicator of the ‘coconutness’/‘model C-ness’ of speakers, this particular list is very useful in itself, and is used below (see 4.7). I hoped it would prove possible to correlate GOOSE fronting with other possibly significant vowels, such as a fronted STRUT or NURSE; see again below.

These issues will be discussed below; here, however, it is useful to first present an initial overview of the rough WL data, based on averaged values, across all the speakers, of their normalised F1 and F2. Here I present the simple vowel chart; certain diphthongs will be dealt with below:



**Table 1: Simple Vowel Average Chart**

At first glance, this chart seems to accord closely with the descriptions of WSAE in the literature; and although an averaged chart such as this obscures differentiation within the group of speakers, it is nonetheless useful from a typological point of view, in order to show the overall type of basic vowel system. Thus the characteristics of this system are discussed below.

For ease of comparison with the literature section, the vowels will be discussed in the order presented in section 4.2. However, it should be noted that due to a difficulty with the TRAP vowel class data, there will necessarily be an excursus into this matter near the beginning of the section, where TRAP is dealt with.



#### **4.7.2 The short front vowels**

As described in section 4.2.1, the short front vowels of WSAE (the TRAP, DRESS and KIT classes) are generally accepted as having undergone a raising shift such that original / $\Theta$ / has raised towards [E], and /E/ towards [ $\epsilon$ ], forcing most of /I/ to centralize towards [I\_] (Lass, 1995). However, Bekker (2009) has more recently found, via his acoustic analysis of the vowels of WSAE, that TRAP in his data appears to be lowering. This will be dealt with below; firstly we shall examine the less problematic DRESS and KIT vowels.

Firstly, it must be repeated that in WSAE, the KIT class occurs as two main variants, depending on phonetic environment; Bekker more recently used six such environments in the examination of his data, but came up with a roughly similar dichotomy (excepting, for now, KIT6 as a third variant). The centralised variant of the KIT vowel, i.e. [I\_] or even approximating [ $\epsilon\rightarrow$ ], does not occur in certain environments: i.e. initially; after [h], or in the environment of a velar consonant (whether preceding or following). In these environments the value of the vowel is closer to [I] (Lass, 1995). Bekker's refinements (2009; see section 4.2.1) include the fact that the [I\_-] like variant occurs in disyllabic words, in unmarked environments, and after /l/ and /r/ or near bilabials (what he calls KIT1, 4 and 5), though never as high as RP [I]. The variant found in the environments //\_; h\_; velar\_; \_velar/ (KIT2), or before palato-alveolars (KIT3), overlap partly with DRESS, although the pre-palato-alveolar variant is slightly more centralised. His backest variant is KIT6, occurring after /w/ or before /l/, and partially overlaps with FOOT.

In my 'Model C' SAE data, the tokens used were *kit*, *bit*, *fish*, *swish*, *hill* and *will*. In Bekker's classification, therefore, these fall under KIT2 (*kit*), KIT5 (*bit*), KIT3 (*fish* and *swish*), and KIT6 (*hill* and *will*). No tokens of KIT1 (disyllabic) or KIT4 (unmarked) were used; but these tokens represent Bekker's 3 classes in that the centralised variant would be expected in KIT5, the more DRESS-like variant in KIT2 and 3, and the FOOT-like variant in KIT6. Further complications occur with the use of *swish* as a token, since the environment of the vowel also includes a KIT6 classification due to the preceding /w/; and with *hill*, where the preceding /h/ includes classification with KIT2.

Thus my KIT-class data can be broadly compared to Bekker's (2009) WSAE data, as well as Lass' (1995) system, in order to see to what extent my speakers fall in with this pattern. The first point to note from the averaged chart is that all the fronter KIT tokens cluster around the front DRESS token (*dress*). *Kit*, *fish* and *swish* (Bekker's KIT2 and 3) are somewhat higher, while *bit* (KIT5) is only very slightly lower, particularly close in height although further back. Bekker's overlap of KIT2 (*kit*) with DRESS (*dress*) is not necessarily borne out because of this small height difference, but also because of the fronter value of *kit*. The similarity he found between KIT2 (*kit*) and KIT3 (*fish* and *swish*) - despite the use of *swish*, involving as it does the KIT6 feature of preceding /w/ - appears to be there, although the KIT3 tokens are backer than KIT2, while contrary to Bekker's findings they are no further from DRESS than KIT2 (*kit*).

*Hill* and *will* present some contrast, since although both, by virtue of a following /l/, fall into the near-FOOT KIT6, *hill* also falls under the higher and fronter KIT2. Thus while *will* is indeed much further back than the other KIT vowels, and only slightly lower than FOOT, *hill* falls very near DRESS - not as high as the other KIT2 token (*kit*), but considerably fronter than *will* and in fact the closest to DRESS out of all the KIT variants.

This somewhat complex-seeming account can be simplified as follows:

- 1) Tokens that are presumed from Bekker's (2009) WSAE data to be the higher variants of KIT (here, *kit*, *fish* and *swish*) are indeed higher than DRESS.
- 2) Tokens that are presumed from Bekker's (2009) WSAE data to be the lower or more centralised variants of KIT (*bit*) are indeed very slightly lower than DRESS.
- 3) The presumably backed tokens (*will* and *hill*) behave predictably in the case of *will*, but not in *hill*, which presumably is shielded from the following-/l/ effect by the preceding /h/.

Thus far, however, it seems that although there is evidence for the KIT split in my data, the tokens are clustered very closely together around DRESS. Nevertheless, the difference is clearly audible in most speakers, and must therefore be sufficiently significant for hearers to make judgements on the vowel class.

In addition, I used *tell* as a token, in order to examine the effect of a following /l/ on a DRESS-type vowel. As can be seen, the effect is considerable: it is closer to central than any of the front-vowel tokens, and nearer *bird* and *nurse* than *dress* (although unrounded). Auditorily, it

is usually much like the TRAP vowel, which is discussed below. This retraction before /l/ is a common feature of WSAE (see Lass, 1995).

#### **4.7.2.1 The trouble with TRAP**

The above data is therefore fairly unproblematic, showing, as it does, a fairly high DRESS, plus considerable overlap between DRESS and the various KIT classes, with a higher KIT where expected. However, the TRAP data presents a problem: as discussed in 4.2.1, Bekker (2009) found a lowered TRAP in his young, respectable female speakers, while earlier studies (see Lass, 1995) point to a raised TRAP, following the KIT and DRESS raising. This indicates that Bekker may have identified a new vowel change; and this lowered TRAP appears to be mimicked in my own Model C data (see *trap* and *bag* in Table 1). The problem arises in the fact that this acoustically identified low front TRAP is in no way identifiable by ear: auditorily, the vowel remains distinctly raised, approaching [E4].

What this means is unclear. The most likely possibility is that my acoustic readings are in fact an artefact; some aspect of the vowel, such as a secondary articulation, is causing the F1 to rise. Mesthrie (p.c.) suggests that this may be a confounding effect of the preceding /r/. However, this does not explain the similarity to Bekker's WSAE data - it is theoretically possible that his data reflects the same problem as mine; or, of course, it is coincidence that my data superficially seem similar to Bekker's. Whatever the case, the very low TRAP shown in Table 1 above does not accurately reflect the data, and should be treated with caution.

#### **4.7.3 The remaining short vowels**

As mentioned above, LOT is described in the WSAE literature as a 'short, rather open and usually weakly rounded back vowel', which often centralises to a position near [ɔ̞]. In young Cape Town and Natal G speakers, Lass describes the vowel as having undergone further raising and unrounding, in the region of [ɔ̞] (1995: 98). Bekker's (2009) study of young, female G speakers from around the country finds that it is a somewhat low back vowel, without raising in comparison to the RP quality, but with some evidence of centralisation. In my own data, as seen above, the vowel appears to be very low and fairly back, and very close to the CLOTH class, by which it is mostly distinguished by length, it being a very short vowel. However, it does appear slightly lower than CLOTH, which itself overlaps more closely with START than with LOT (see below).

STRUT, in my data, is far removed from both LOT and TRAP, while Bekker's (2009) data suggests that in General WSAE it is fronter than LOT but close to TRAP. However, because (as discussed above) the position of TRAP in Table 1 is inaccurate, it is plausible that the two vowel qualities are closer than they appear. Nonetheless, there is an audible difference between the two. STRUT, in my data, is therefore a highish but fairly central vowel.

FOOT, according to Bekker's data, is fairly front, according with Lass' (1995) description of FOOT in young female speakers as approximating a lowered [←]. In my data, as can be seen, it has a similar value, although it is further back than GOOSE and not fully central. As can be seen, it is of a similar height to most of the KIT classes, and *will*, the pre-/l/ variant of KIT, is very close to it, as is predicted by the literature on WSAE.

#### **4.7.4 Long vowels**

FLEECE in WSAE is unproblematically described as a long monophthong [i:], and in my data is likewise high and front, with no diphthongisation.

NURSE, which as indicated above is a sociolinguistic marker separating C WSAE from the other lects, is in my data similarly a fairly fronted vowel, and similar in height to DRESS and KIT (see *nurse* and *bird* in Table 1). However, it does not appear to be as fronted as Lass (1995) and Bekker (2009) claim is the case in young female G speakers, with a [O\_:] value, which perhaps suggests a slightly more Cultivated trend among my speakers than in young white females. The difference between *nurse* and *bird* is puzzling, with *nurse* fronter but lower than *bird*; and may simply be a sign that the lexical diffusion of this variant has not fully spread through the vowel system. Both are perceptibly rounded, separating them distinctly from *tell*, to which they appear close.

GOOSE, as described above, is an important sociolinguistic marker in WSAE, as well as showing signs of fronting in young black speakers' accents. In my data, as can be seen, the average value is a high central [←:], as is not unexpected; but as will be discussed below, the average chart obscures significant variation between speakers. This is, of course, the case with every vowel in the chart, as this is the nature of averages, but in the case of GOOSE it is most pronounced, and perhaps most important as an indicator of different groupings within the data. This will be taken up again below.

The THOUGHT class is represented in my data by both *thought* and *north*, but with little differentiation between the two. Lass (1995) and Bekker (2009) both claim a value of [o:] for young G speakers, and my speakers fall in with this. However, while Bekker (2009) describes an overlap between THOUGHT and LOT in his data, mine shows nothing of the kind: a great height difference separates the two.

The BATH class, represented in my data by *bath*, *start* and *palm*, occurs as a low, fairly back vowel, thus according with Lass' (1995) description of G BATH. However, Bekker's (2010) finding that in his data it is raised to a mid back vowel, is not borne out in my data; this again might indicate that as a group, my speakers are slightly more conservative than their young white female counterparts.

SQUARE (represented by both *square* and *hair*), as expected, is fully monophthongised, and appears close to DRESS, although somewhat fronter, particularly in the case of *hair*. Why this is so is unclear, but is perhaps due to an effect of the preceding consonants; or, as with *nurse* and *bird*, incomplete lexical diffusion.

#### **4.8 Individual vowel systems**

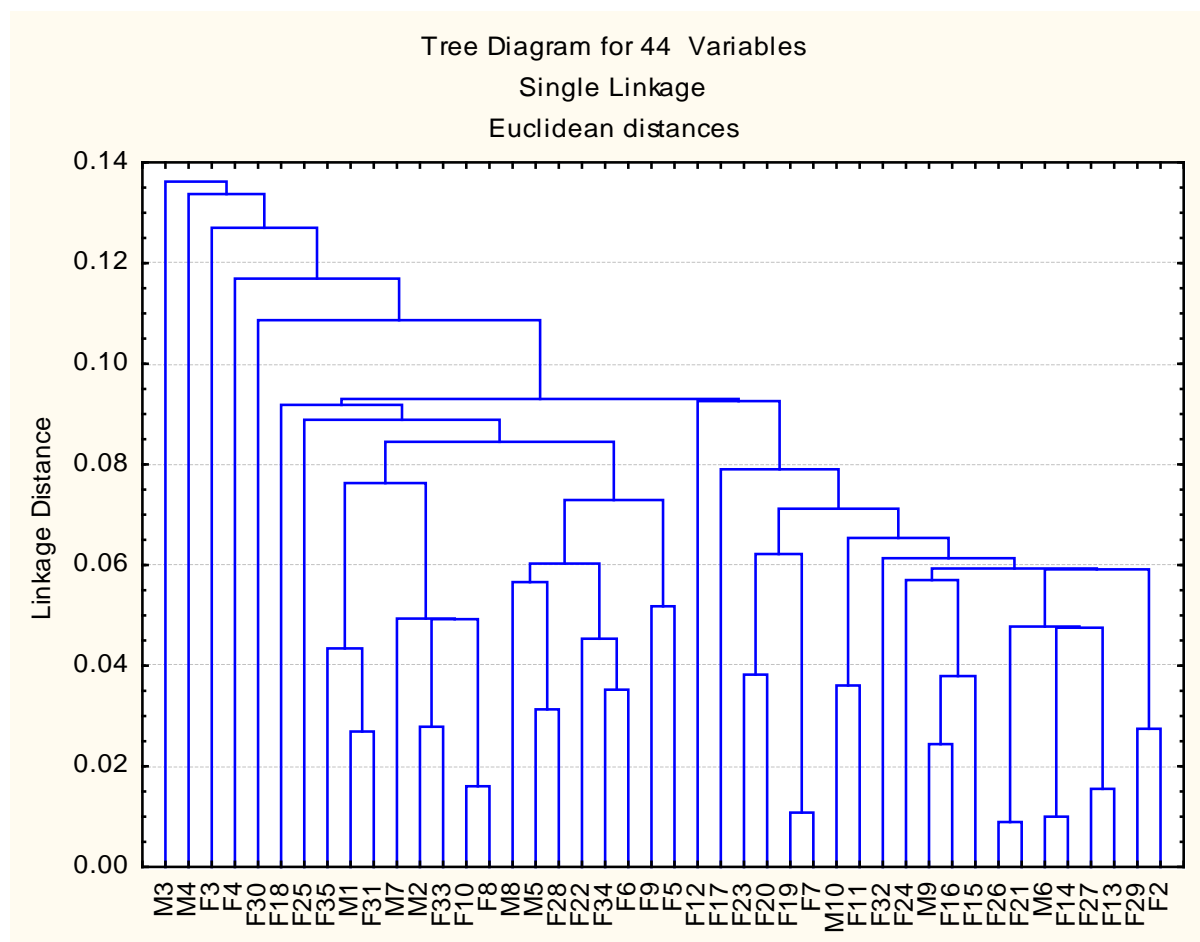
It seems most useful to begin by classifying speakers according to the frontness of their GOOSE vowel; since from the literature, especially Mesthrie's (2010) comparison of black with white speakers, which found that particularly young black females were close behind their white counterparts in fronting, and Lass's (1995) comment about front GOOSE being, at the time, a marker of whiteness, it may be assumed to be a marker of 'model C-ness' as well. The list below, therefore, ranks speakers according to their GOOSE fronting (low normalised F2), from least to most:

**Table 2: normalised GOOSE values ranked according to F2:**

F1	F2	Speaker
0.783	0.587	M3
0.64	0.698	M7
0.79	0.723	F35
0.682	0.736	F8
0.698	0.737	F10
0.634	0.747	M4
0.608	0.757	F33
0.784	0.766	F31
0.761	0.78	M1

0.658	0.828	F6
0.841	0.838	F18
0.61	0.852	F22
0.654	0.863	F34
0.604	0.912	M5
0.703	0.917	F9
0.754	0.926	F5
0.613	0.942	F28
0.556	0.942	M8
0.783	1.01	F25
0.494	1.062	M4
0.708	1.065	F19
0.699	1.071	F7
0.758	1.102	F23
0.796	1.106	F20
0.613	1.123	F17
0.7	1.146	M6
0.7	1.156	F14
0.745	1.172	F26
0.753	1.176	F21
0.811	1.196	F32
0.763	1.198	F13
0.688	1.202	F27
0.614	1.202	F2
0.591	1.217	F29
0.747	1.235	F16
0.733	1.255	M9
0.664	1.29	F24
0.721	1.291	F15
0.69	1.35	F11
0.665	1.376	M10
0.773	1.391	F12
0.9	1.393	F3
0.785	1.499	F30
0.672	1.529	F4

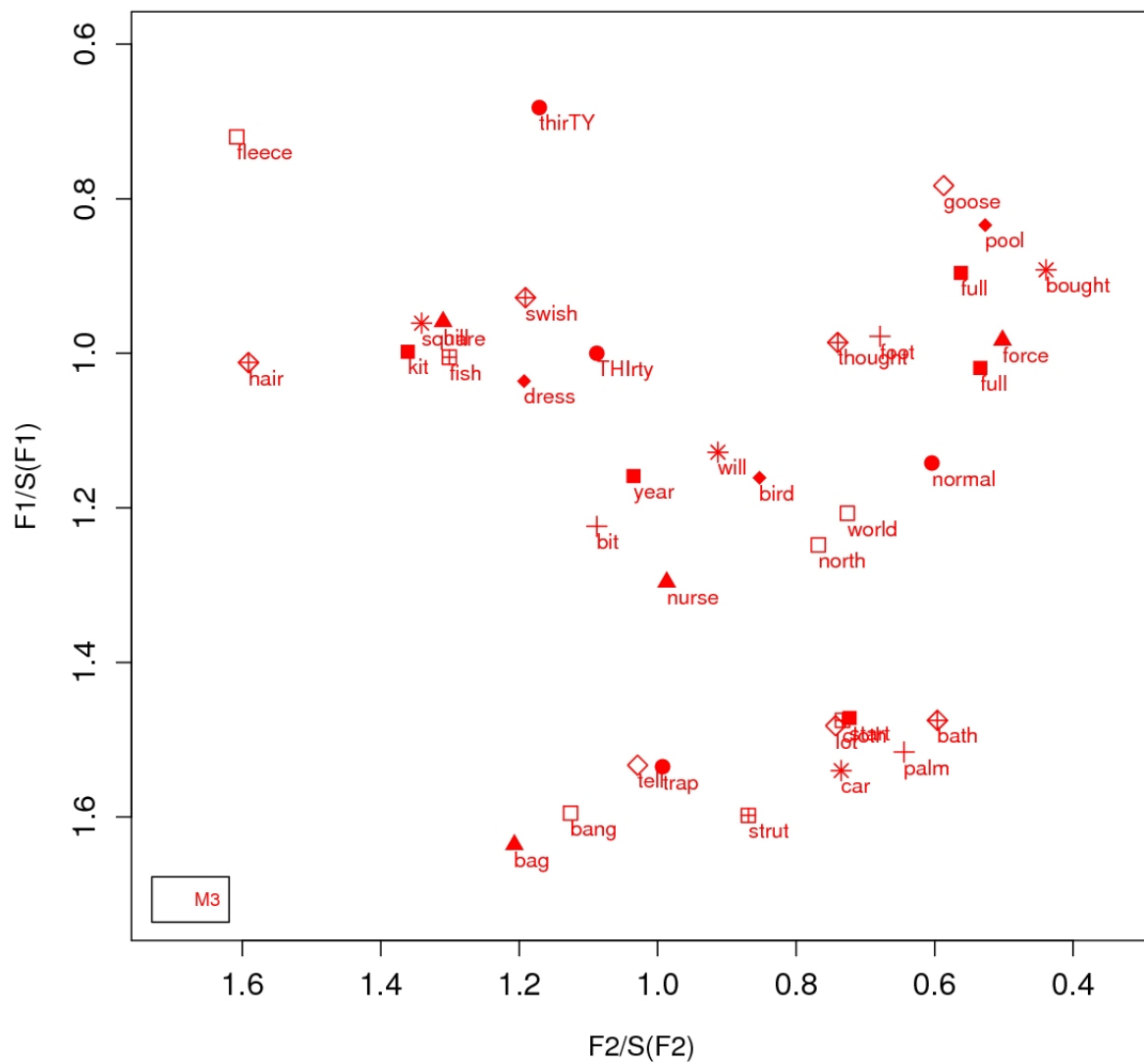
The following dendrogram, generated with Statistica, provides further information:



**Figure 2: Cluster analysis of speakers according to normalised GOOSE values.**

The cluster analysis of this vowel across speakers, as shown above, suggests two or possibly three clusters among the GOOSE vowels, and seems to indicate in comparison with the ranked table that it is the F2 value that is mostly, though not entirely, influencing the clusters. It therefore may be useful to compare the charts of the most fronted and least fronted GOOSE speakers, in order to see if any other major differences emerge. For this reason, these are reproduced below. In addition, a more central speaker (F23) will be examined for the sake of comparison.

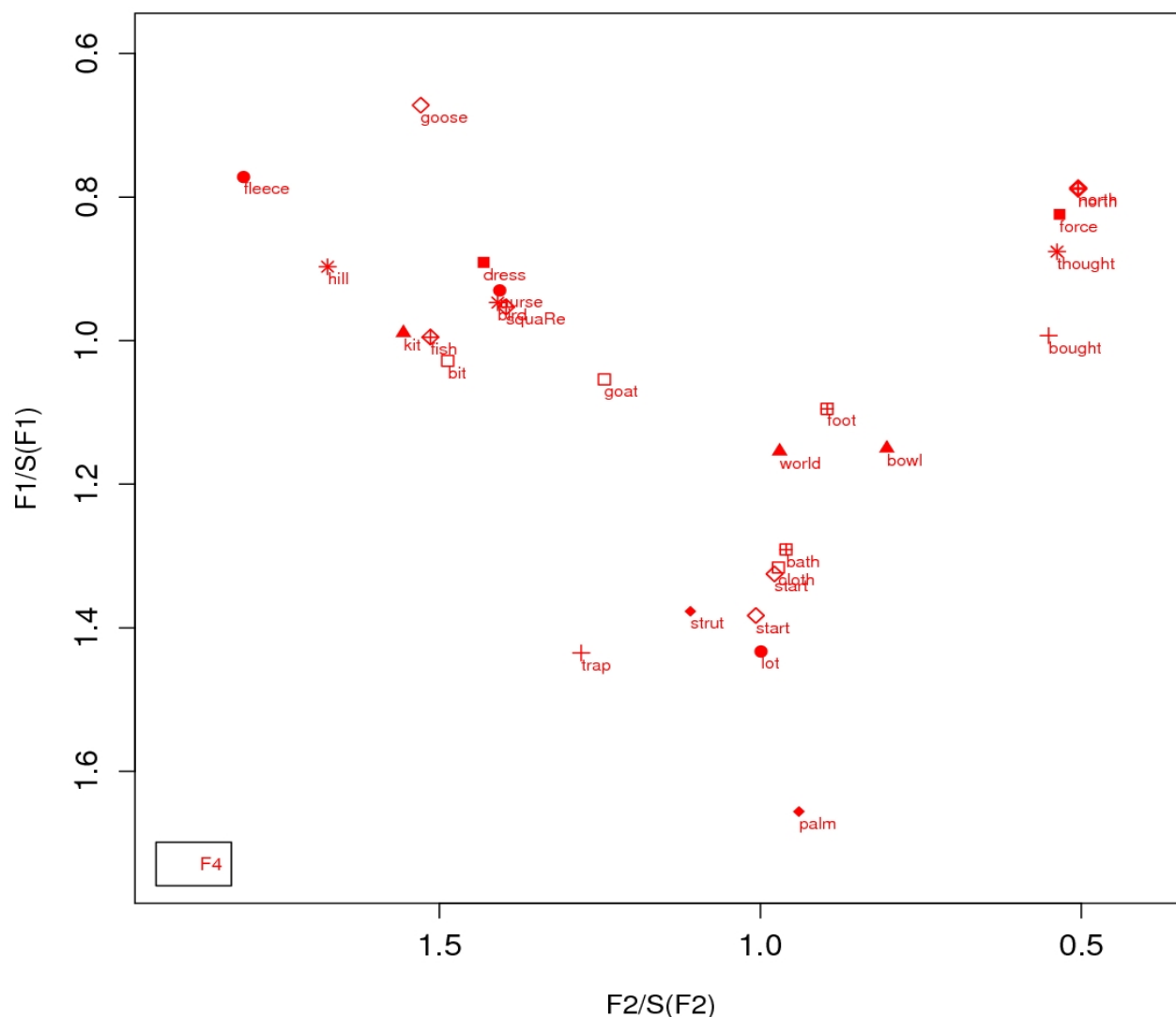
### Individual vowel formant values Watt & Fabricius normalized



**Table 3: M3's simple vowels, normalised**



## Individual vowel formant values Watt & Fabricius normalized



**Table 4: F4's simple vowels, normalised**

Unfortunately, the charts are difficult to compare absolutely, because the speaker with the frontest GOOSE (F4), and the speaker with the backest GOOSE (M3), did not read entirely the same word lists, F4 being recorded at a much earlier date before several new tokens were added. Nonetheless, it is possible to see that while M3's GOOSE is almost as back as his /I/-influenced POOL, F4's is in line with her KIT and BIT tokens, although not as far forward as her FLEECE. It is also interesting, however, to look at other differences between the other vowel distributions:

- F4's STRUT is higher and fronter than M3's - M3 has a normalised F1 of 1.598 and F2 of 0.869, while F4 has a normalised F1 of 1.377 and F2 of 1.109. This suggests that

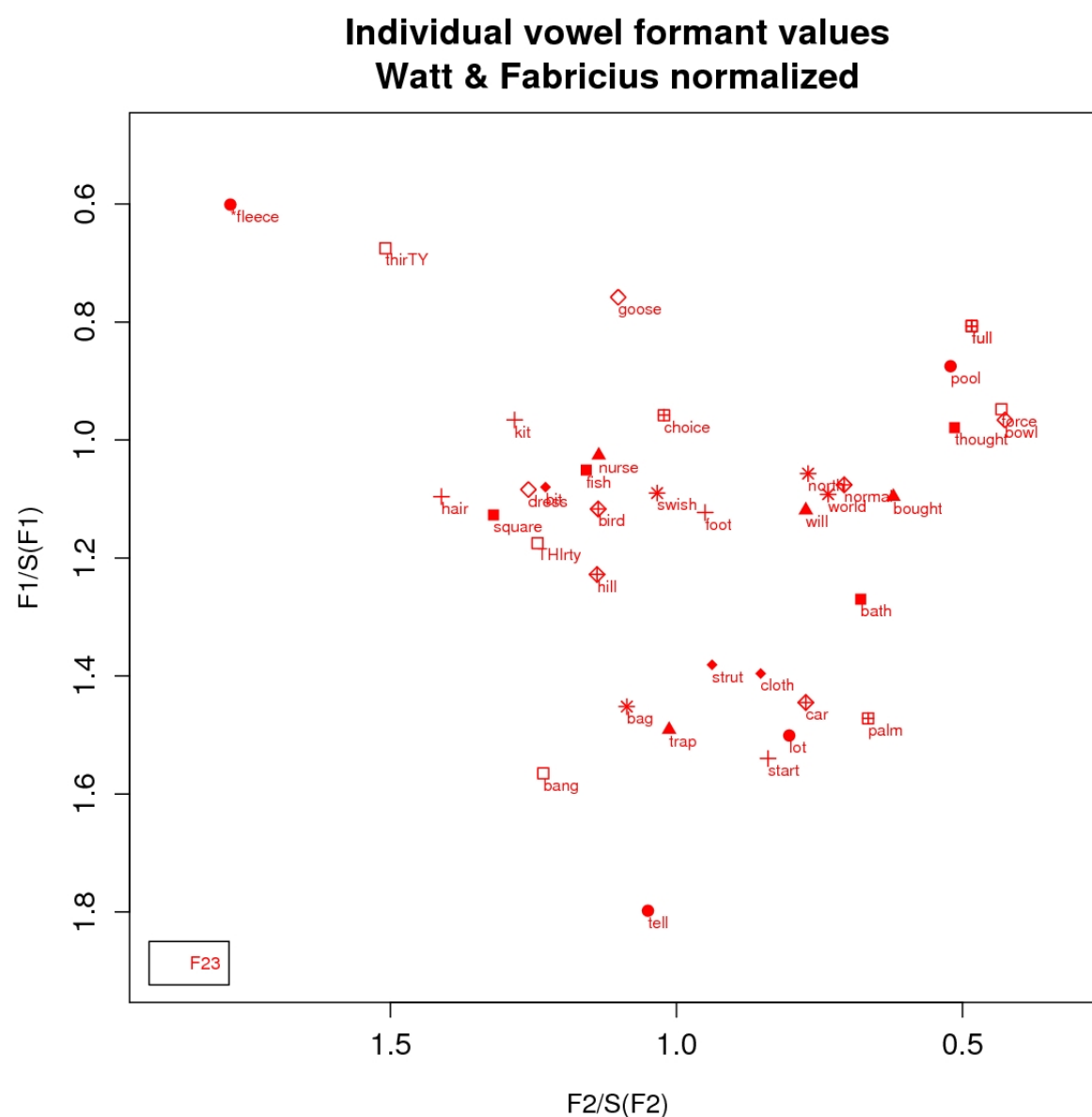
indeed, a fronted STRUT, along with a front GOOSE, as suggested by the literature on WSAE (see above), may be a marker of an advanced, young female accent.

- A surprising result is that F4's KIT, BIT and FISH tokens are remarkably close together, suggesting a very weak KIT split, if any at all; while M3's KIT and BIT are widely separated, clearly showing the split. This suggests a highly conservative (Cultivated) orientation in at least this part of F4's vowel system, although the rest seems to show an advanced young female General accent. Additionally, her HILL token is far higher and fronter than her other KIT-type vowels, while M3's sits near KIT and FISH. This does hint at a partial KIT split based on the influence of the initial /h/; the following /l/ appears to have no effect.
- There is a very sharp difference between the NURSE tokens in the two charts: while M3's is a lowish central vowel (F1 1.296, F2 0.987), F4's is clearly raised and fronted, very close to her DRESS value (F1 0.93, F2 1.406). Auditorily it is also clearly rounded – another marker of advanced female General WSAE – and possibly also a source of some of its apparent raising via F3. In comparison, M3's NURSE, as well as being much lower and backer, is unrounded.
- FOOT is another token which differentiates the speakers – F4's, in addition to sounding far fronter, clearly shows in the normalised chart as fairly central, as well as slightly lower than M3's – F1 1.095 and F2 0.896, vs. F1 0.978 and F2 0.679. M3's backer vowel (further back than THOUGHT) shows a more apparently conservative (Cultivated) quality, although this may in fact rather be influenced by his L1 (see section on Bantu vowel systems).

The above appear to me the most obviously significant differences in the vowels generally between the two speakers chosen according to their extremes of GOOSE-fronting/backing. While it may be hasty to jump to conclusions about the differences between these two being partially attributable to gender, it is nonetheless necessary to acknowledge that the most and least fronted of the GOOSE values belong respectively to a female and male speaker. In addition, a cursory examination of the ranked table above shows most male speakers in the backer half of the table. Nonetheless, three males appear in the fronter half, so that it is not necessarily possible to draw any concrete conclusion.

A simple T-test of male vs. female averages for this vowel, conducted in Excel, showed that in fact it was not significant for fronting (F2) ( $p = 0.08055$ ), but was significant for lowering (F1) ( $p = 0.038793$ ). GOOSE lowering is thus more salient according to gender than fronting, although the  $p$  value for fronting is close to being significant. In summary, females lower GOOSE significantly more than males; they also front it but the scores are just short of significant.

Having examined the two extreme ends of the GOOSE spectrum, it may be useful to compare the features noted above with those found in the word list of a speaker in the middle areas of the spectrum. For this reason, the chart of F23 is shown below:



**Table 5: F23's simple vowels, normalised**

Naturally, her GOOSE value is somewhat central (F1 0.758, F2 1.102), if slightly low; but additionally, her NURSE token seems fairly mid-central (F1 1.026, F2 1.136) – lying somewhere between M3 and F4, with moderate rounding. STRUT, however, lies closer to F4's values (F1 1.381, F2 0.938) – again, it is tempting to see this as a gender effect. Her KIT-split is less pronounced than M3's, but is clearly apparent, unlike F4's. FOOT, again, is close to central, like F4's (F1 1.123, F2 0.95), far fronter than M3's.

What this seems to suggest, therefore, is a general continuum across the accents, tentatively biased in terms of advanced WSAE features towards females. It also suggests that GOOSE is indeed a good marker of 'model C-ness', and appears to be related to other advanced features of the WSAE-influenced accent. However, more interesting than these phonetic features themselves is their connection to the type of attitudinal and biographical information presented in Chapter 3. To what extent can we find differences in the upbringing and attitudes of, for example, F4 and M3, which might influence their degree of 'model C-ness'? To this end, biographical comparisons of the two speakers at the extreme ends of the GOOSE spectrum are given below. Some of this information may be gleaned from Chapter 3, but it is useful here to summarise it again and include more detail on these individuals.

#### **4.9 Speaker biographies and attitudes**

The most obvious difference between the two speakers, F4 and M3, as already mentioned, is their gender, and as discussed there is a significant correlation for lowering of GOOSE by females, and a close to significant correlation for fronting. It is worth bearing in mind, given the general finding across sociolinguistic studies that (particularly young) females lead language change towards more prestigious variants. Thus for example, Labov (1972: 43) states that 'in careful speech, women use fewer stigmatized forms than men, and are more sensitive than men to the prestige pattern.' If we assume that a white/model C accent is prestigious, then we might expect young females to target the prestige variables, particularly fronted GOOSE, while males may fall further behind. This is supported by Mesthrie's (2010) finding that young black females are fronting GOOSE to a considerable degree (see, however, section 4.13 for the interview style findings).

Other differences emerge from an examination of their linguistic biographies. F4 was first exposed to L1 WSAE at the age of 3, in a mostly white pre-school. On the other hand, M3

had no exposure to English at all until the age of 9 – in fact, when he moved to an English-speaking school in Cape Town (from a Xhosa-medium one) he had to repeat Grade 3 because his English was not good enough. He admits that he found learning English ‘tough’, while F4 appears to have no memory of learning it at all – it can be presumed that hers was a natural young child’s acquisition process, while his was more complex – perhaps learning more than acquisition.

From these initial exposures to L1 English, their patterns of language use continue to contrast. As discussed in Chapter 3, F4 in fact ‘lost’ her ability to speak Pedi (her HL) for a few years – initially, while her mother would speak Pedi to her, she would reply in English, until eventually they both switched to using mostly English at home. She was able to ‘relearn’ the language at the age of 5 or 6, because she had found herself unable to communicate with her extended family, but continues to use English as her dominant language.

On the other hand, M3 has never ‘lost’ his HL, Xhosa, and it continued as his dominant language even while at school: he and his best friend, another Xhosa speaker, would use the language everywhere but in the actual classroom. Additionally, he says that he ‘hardly’ uses English at home, and ‘here’s [UCT] the only place I use English’. In the flat that he shares with another Xhosa speaker, they only speak Xhosa to each other. By contrast, F4 moved in with a white flatmate and therefore presumably uses only English with her.

These relationships with speakers of other languages are also telling. In a linguistically diverse environment like UCT, one’s friendship networks largely determine the languages one uses, according to the extent that speakers have languages in common. Thus M3, despite his clear preference for Xhosa, does use English with his UCT friendship group, because most of them are not Xhosa speakers. He admits (with an audible sigh) that at UCT he actually speaks very little Xhosa; it is through his off-campus friends and family network that the language is maintained. This is a common theme throughout the interviews; on campus, English dominates.

Interestingly, considering his apparent feelings of regret about the English dominance in his campus life, he has chosen a white girlfriend who speaks almost entirely English, although she has enrolled for Xhosa classes off campus. They speak Xhosa to each other occasionally,

for her to practise, but in general their conversation is in English. An interesting point raised here was about his mother's potential reaction to this relationship, if she knew about it: it would be centred on the possibility of his 'losing' Xhosa rather than around race specifically. Despite strong and deliberate Xhosa maintenance at home, his mother does worry about him 'losing the language'. Again, this contrasts strongly with F4's mother, who allowed her to shift entirely to English as a young child.

Another clear contrast between the two speakers has been their upbringing: M3 has lived mostly in townships, and returns to the Eastern Cape to see his rural family at least twice a year. F4, however, has always lived in 'white' suburbs, and although she now speaks Pedi again to her extended family, she does not seem to see as much of them as M3 does of his, given the two to three year gap between her language shift and the realisation that she needed to relearn Pedi in order to communicate with them.

Further differences emerge in the two speakers' professed attitudes towards language maintenance and their potential future children: M3 thinks that his would 'naturally' be bilingual in Xhosa and English, because he would send them to English-medium schools, but says emphatically that they '*would* speak Xhosa at home'. On the other hand, F4, via email, seems somewhat ambivalent about her future children's languages: asked if it would be important to her to bring up any children she might have as Pedi-speaking or English-speaking, she replied: 'It would depend. If I lived in SA, I would make sure they could speak Pedi so that they could communicate with their family better [...] But if I were to move overseas, I might not be that concerned about it'.

This question about future children and language use was, I found, one of the most revealing in the interviews. As discussed in Chapter 3, most interviewees claimed that they wanted their children to be able to speak their HL, even if they themselves were not proficient in it. It is therefore interesting that the speaker with the most front GOOSE seems to attach less importance to HL maintenance in her future family.

Perceptions of racism in their schools also differ between F4 and M3. F4 attended a very prestigious private girls-only high school in Johannesburg, and although her year had the highest proportion of black students in it in the school, this still only amounted to eight out of sixty girls. However, F4, while laughingly admitting to sometimes feeling 'outnumbered',

never seems to have had any serious problems with the situation. She sums it up by saying ‘I never really thought about it [...] people are just people and that’s basically it’. On the other hand, M3 displays some ambivalence about racism in his primary and high schools, but has narratives about racist incidents that happened in his schools, particularly high school. He acknowledges, however, that his primary school may have been equally biased; his perceptions in high school may have been altered by the fact that he was ‘older’ and better able to interpret incidents.

What these two experiences seem to suggest is that F4 was more in sympathy with ‘whiteness’, and may have been more fully assimilated into the school culture than M3 was into his. This also seems related to the proportions of black to white students in the schools – in M3’s there were more black students. However, his attitudes to racism in his school are decidedly ambivalent – at times he defends his teachers and principal, while at others he uses narratives that show their apparent bias. Nonetheless, it is clear that F4 was more comfortable in her school than he was in his.

If there is a continuum of accents based around the fronting of GOOSE, we might also expect to find a continuum of sorts between the types of schools, types of neighbourhoods, and types of experiences or attitudes of the speakers. Thus it is possible to compare our example central-GOOSE speaker, F23’s, experiences to those of F4 and M3, to see if this is plausible.

Her case is not directly comparable to either of theirs, however, because she grew up in Mthatha (formerly Umtata) in the Eastern Cape, in the former Transkei, which was a Bantu homeland established by the Apartheid government for Xhosa speakers (see Chapter 2). Thus although she learned English in pre-primary school, it is unclear what variety she would have learned, since there were, according to her, no white people in Mthatha at the time. However, in terms of neighbourhood (and associated class positioning), she says that it was ‘a cross between uh a suburb and like a township. It’s not really either’. While this comment seems to place her neatly in the middle of F4 and M3, it must be remembered that even a well-off suburban neighbourhood in Mthatha would be black, so that her experience would have been very different to F4’s. F23 believes she learned most of her English, and her accent, from watching television, however, and feels that her accent has not changed since moving to a former model C school, and mostly white neighbourhood, in Grade 8 – hence she believes that she has always had a WSAE-oriented accent.

Whether or not this is true is debatable; there is also the influence of Coloured teachers in her primary school to be considered. However, no trace of a Coloured accent remains that I could detect.

Her model C high school, and simultaneous movement into a white suburb, can be expected to have influenced her speech, but she is convinced, as above, that she has always had the same accent. However, she admits that taking part in the debating society has probably influenced her speech – this comment arose in the context of her mother saying she ‘twanged too much’ (see 3.12).

In terms of friendship networks in high school, she did have white friends, many of whom she is still in contact with; though since moving to UCT she now has more black friends. Since these friends, however, also attended model C or private schools, their accents are likely to be similar to hers.

Another indicator of her attitude to ‘whiteness’ arose when I asked her about boyfriends – she is unsure whether or not she would be prepared to date outside her race group, and certainly wouldn’t marry a white man because of her mother’s disapproval. Nonetheless, her family is very strongly in favour of ‘education’, and would deeply disapprove if she married a black man who couldn’t speak English without a black accent – ‘a total no-no’.

In terms of language use within the home, she mixes English and Xhosa, even with her cousins who did not attend model C schools, although with them the proportion of English is lower. With her school and university friends, she speaks almost entirely English, even with other Xhosa speakers, because ‘we all speak in English’.

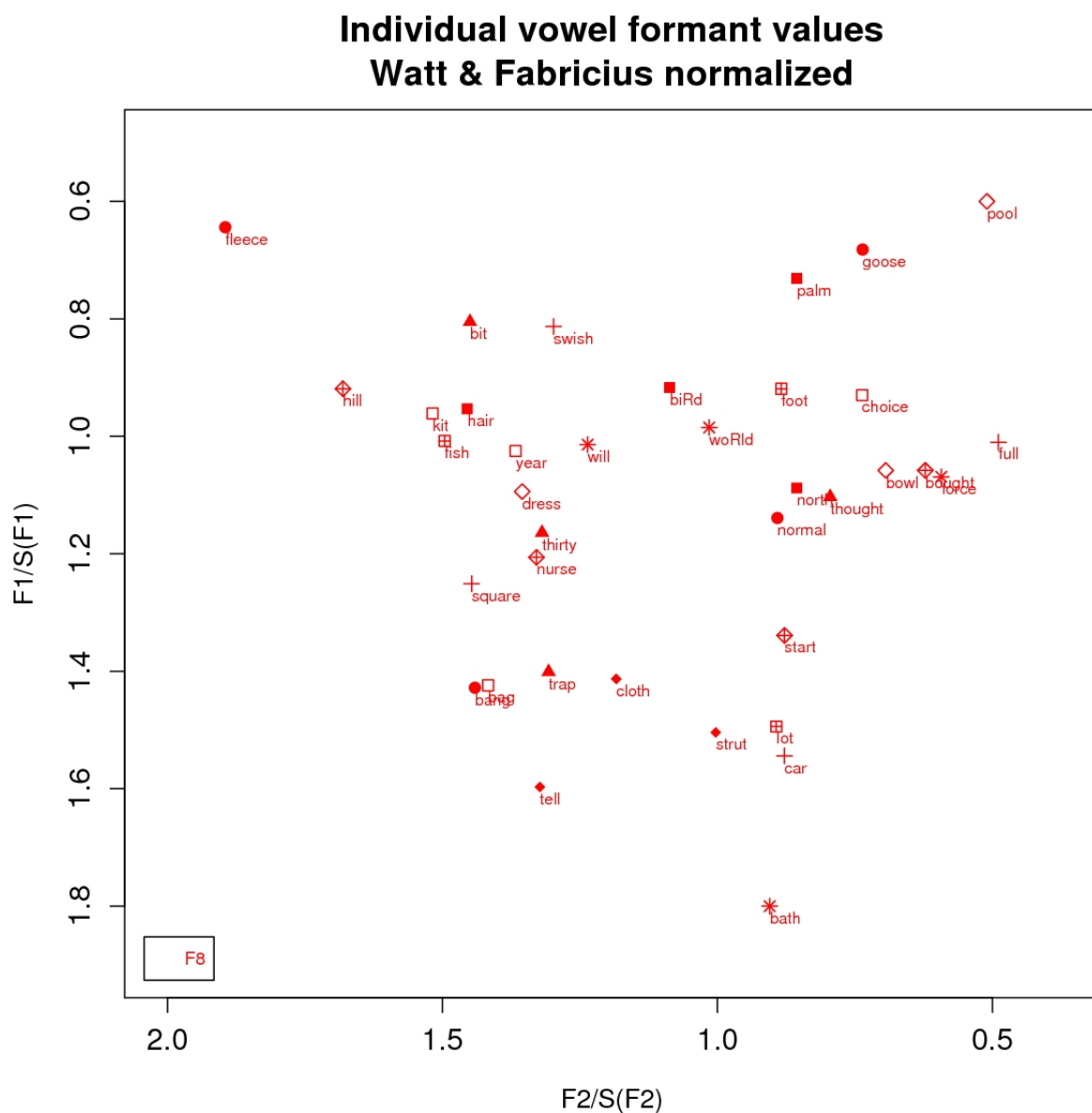
F23, therefore, seems in some ways closer to F4 than to M3 in her language use and attitudes. Again it is tempting to see this as a female-led phenomenon.

The above overview has given us a picture of some ‘typical’ speakers at both ends as well as the middle of the spectrum. This apparently neat continuum, however, is not the full picture; there are anomalies, and these are described below.



#### 4.10 Atypical speakers

**F8:** in the ranked GOOSE table, F8 falls low in the fronting scale – only three speakers behind M3:



**Table 6: F8's simple vowels, normalised**

We might therefore expect her education, upbringing, neighbourhood and attitudes to accord more closely with what we might call the township-influenced rather than the suburban type. However, this is not the case: she learned English in a white Sandton (upmarket) pre-school, and says that she has spoken it 'as long as I could talk'. She was educated in a private school up until matric, and had white friends; in fact, she explicitly comments that some black

students she knew were told by their parents to ‘stick to the white children so you can learn English’. She didn’t have this problem since she spoke English already, but mixed with the white students anyway. In terms of neighbourhood, she has lived in (white) suburbs all her life.

How, then, to explain the backness of her GOOSE vowel? It is not an anomaly in the word list; throughout her interview she speaks with backer variants (see 4.13 below). She is highly aware of herself as ‘privileged’, and of the independence of mind that her private school education has given her; and admits that she expresses herself better in English than either Zulu (HL) or Xhosa (which she has become used to speaking in Cape Town). All of this sounds much more like F4’s history than M3’s or even F23’s, and yet she retains the back GOOSE variant.

There is no easy answer. Although her school became more ‘black’ as she grew older, she did not identify or mix with these new students as she found that their ‘upbringing’ was simply too different from her own; they are therefore unlikely to have had an influence on her accent. In addition, this suggests that holding onto the older BSAE variant(s) is probably not linked to race loyalty. A further mystery surrounds where she could have acquired these variants, considering her schooling career. She does, however, speak only a little English at home, and mainly Zulu; and so it may be parental influence. There is little in her attitudes to suggest that she objects to ‘whiteness’, and yet her accent does not reflect this. It may simply be a matter of closeness to her mother, who she lived with growing up. Her family history is somewhat complex, since her mother now works overseas and she and her sisters now live with her father and stepmother, but in her formative years she lived with her mother.

**The fronter males: M10, M9 and M6:** If we continue to tentatively suspect that GOOSE-fronting is, or ought to be expected to be, more of a female than a male phenomenon, we need to look at those males whose GOOSE F2 values seem rather fronter than might be expected. For this reason, the figures are given below:

Speaker	F1/S(F1)	F2/S(F2)
M6	0.983	1.146
M9	1.021	1.255
M10	1.046	1.376

**Table 7: Fronter GOOSE male values, normalised**

As can be seen by the fact that M9 and M6 have normalised F2 values just over 1 (while the frontest females are closer to 1.4), it is clear that their GOOSE values are in fact rather central than front; they are therefore only particularly advanced in comparison to the other male speakers, whose vowels fall into the back to backish range. Only M10 seems actually advanced beyond a central vowel, with a normalised F2 of 1376.

This is difficult to explain; although M10 has for several years had a very racially mixed group of friends (unusual in black students from model C schools moving to UCT; see Chapter 3), his rural background and some attendance at former Coloured schools would not seem to encourage any such fronting. Since he is the only male with a frontish GOOSE it is necessary to try to explain it. As with F8, there is no easy answer to be found in his background; perhaps his more recent social contacts, as an undergraduate and then postgraduate at UCT, with networks including many white students, have encouraged a shift in the vowel.

As for M9 and M6, their centralised GOOSE is easier to explain, if not entirely satisfactorily. M6, as may be remembered from Chapter 3, has a white Welsh mother and little contact with his black father, and may therefore feel less inhibited by traditional notions of black maleness (if these include a backer GOOSE). M9 has a majority-white private school background, from pre-primary to matric (as no other of the male speakers do), and mostly remembers it fondly and with respect; and he continues post-school to associate with male and female friends from a similar school background. This may contribute to his centralised GOOSE, according to these friendships, which were maintained throughout school and are now echoed in his university friendships.

As all of the above shows, there is not necessarily a clear-cut pattern as to why some speakers front GOOSE and others do not; but nonetheless, the general pattern indicated by the

continuum between F4, F23, and M3 can be used. To sum it up, the major determinants of GOOSE fronting seem to be:

- Femaleness (apart from the unusual male speakers)
- Private or Model C schooling from a young age
- Relationships with white schoolmates and friends, and associated positive-seeming attitudes to white values as espoused by the schools
- Time spent in white suburbs vs. black townships, with the influence of WSAE fronting increasing according to the age at which ‘white suburban influence’ began.

#### **4.11 Diphthongs**

Up to this point I have not mentioned diphthongs; although an examination of F4’s chart above (Table 2) shows her GOAT token as monophthongised and slightly front of central. This monophthongisation is, however, surprisingly uncommon in the data, which contrasts with Lass’ (1995) description of General speakers as having this tendency. A possible avoidance of monophthongisation may in fact be a marker of model C-ness as opposed to whiteness; but more likely it is simply a result of formal word-list style. That it nonetheless occurs in F4’s word-list style is perhaps not surprising considering her other ‘advanced’ General features.

For reasons of both space and relevance, I do not intend to discuss all the diphthongs, but rather focus on those which have been suggested by Lass (1995) as sociolinguistically interesting: PRICE, MOUTH, and their potential crossover; FACE, and GOAT itself. To recap from section 4.2.4 above, Lass describes these in General speakers as:

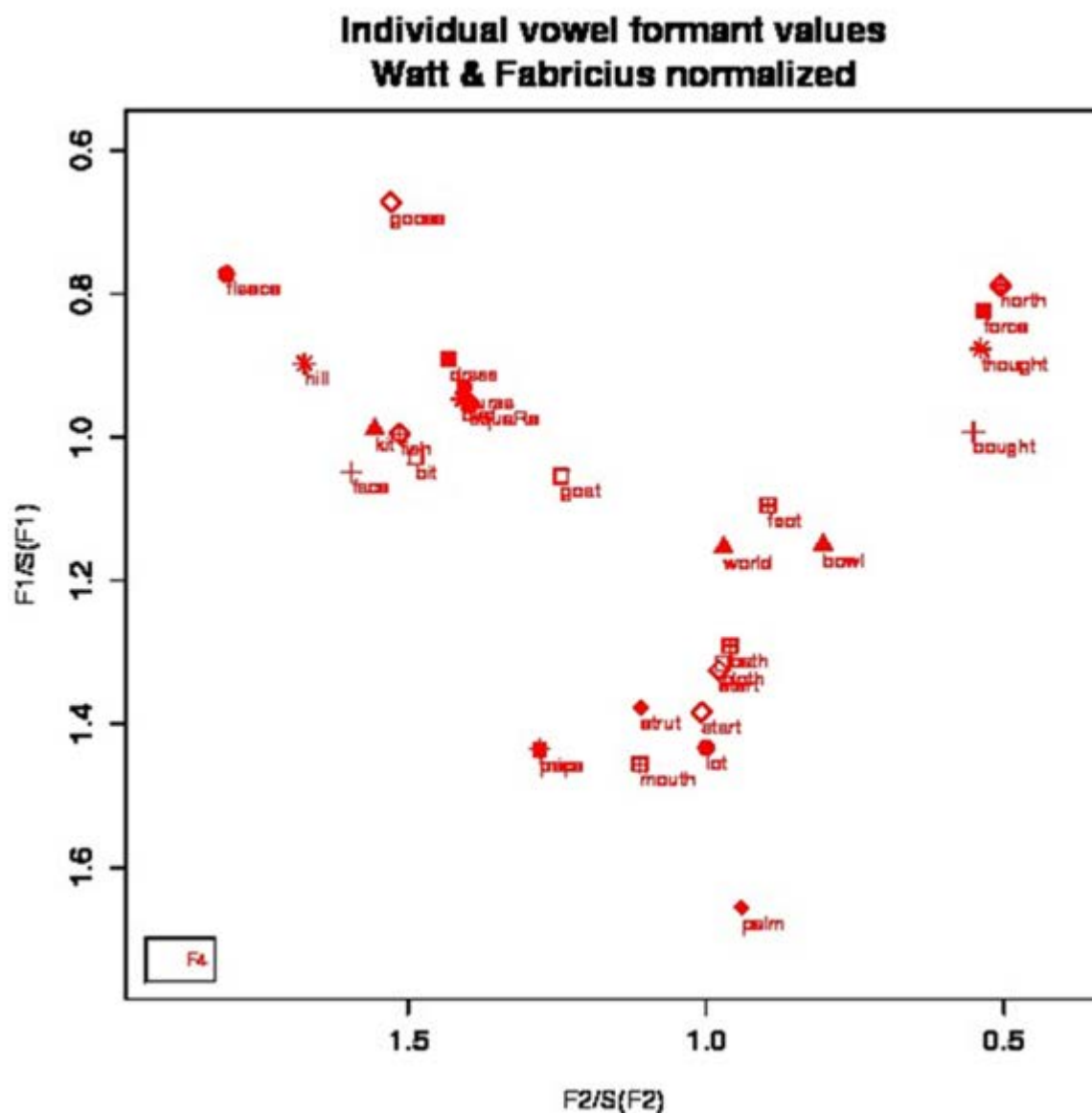
**MOUTH/PRICE:** Wells (1982) suggests a crossover between these two in SAE, but Lass (1995) claims that for Cultivated and General varieties the crossover does not occur. Both usually have [aɪ] for PRICE and something near [AY] for MOUTH - i.e. the onset and second element generally agree in backness. For younger General speakers, the second element of MOUTH may be unrounded. There may also be monophthongisation in General speakers, particularly young female ones; but this is more common in fast speech and may explain why it does not show up to any great extent in my word list data. Although the [A:] of monophthongised MOUTH approaches BATH, it is usually higher and slightly fronter (Lass, 1995). These two vowels must therefore be compared within my speaker sample.

**FACE:** Lass (1995) describes this as an important social marker, differentiating between Cultivated and General on the one hand, and Broad on the other. Thus both Cultivated and General may have an RP-like [eɪ], while Broad has a lowered and often retracted onset, so that the values may range from [eɪ] to [ɛ̃\_ɪ] to [øɪ]. Thus the closer the onset is to STRUT, the more Broad the variety. Whether this Broad orientation occurs in my speakers, particularly males, is discussed below. Younger, usually female, speakers may have a very short, and peripheral and open, second element close to monophthongisation. On the other hand, male speakers of less standard varieties of General may have an opener onset, yielding [eɪ] or even [øɪ], and thus approaching the Broad values. We might therefore expect to see a difference between males and females in my sample, if my male speakers are less oriented toward standard WSAE than females.

**GOAT:** Lass (1995) states that in General varieties, unrounded first elements do not occur, as opposed to Cultivated, and the lip-rounding is stronger, so that the normal onset is [ɔ̃]. The second element, if monophthongisation does not occur, may be in the vicinity of [←] or unrounded [Φ\_]. However monophthongisation is apparently common in WSAE, especially among younger speakers, although in this case it does not seem to be linked to gender. This monophthongisation can lead to an apparent near-merger with NURSE; there is a minimal contrast between [ɔ̃:] and [O:].

These, then, are the diphthongs I feel are most likely to be interesting and revealing. However, I choose to focus only on the first element of the diphthong, since it is these that compare most closely to the simple vowel system. Although monophthongisation is rare in my data, the second elements seem reasonably unproblematic from the WSAE literature, and therefore less sociolinguistically interesting; I therefore feel justified in excluding them from the analysis. Similarly, I choose to focus less on the rare monophthong tokens on the basis that they are likely to be similar to the first element of the genuine diphthongs.

We can therefore examine the charts of my three example speakers again, to see if there is a noticeable difference in their diphthong onsets:



**Table 8: F4's vowel chart, with 4 normalised diphthong onsets**

As F4's chart shows, her FACE onset is fairly high, close to her KIT tokens, although further forward. This seems to accord with Lass' (1995) observation that General speakers have an RP [e]-like onset – although it is lower than her DRESS vowel, it must be remembered that DRESS is raised above RP [e] as part of the short front vowel chain shift.

Her GOAT, as mentioned above, is in fact monophthongal, but also very central. Thus the fronting of GOAT to approach NURSE is clearly not apparent. However, auditorily there is clear rounding – a feature which is described as characteristic of young General speakers. It

seems she may have a compromise between a Cultivated central vowel, and a General rounded one.

In terms of PRICE and MOUTH, there is clearly no crossover – both are low vowels but PRICE is clearly fronter than MOUTH. This too accords with Lass's (1995) statement that the crossover does not occur in General speech, and so here she is also following the General WSAE norm.

In the chart below (Table 8), F23's FACE onset is less easy to see, as it falls within a complex gathering of vowels; but it is clearly closer than F4's is to her DRESS. F4's normalised FACE value is F1: 1.049; F2: 1.4, while F23's is F1: 1.418; F2: 0.956. Their DRESS values however are for F23, F1: 1.084; F2: 1.259, compared to F4's DRESS of F1: 0.891; F2: 1.431. However, her DRESS is also somewhat low compared to F4's, which may suggest a less 'advanced' General WSAE orientation in terms of DRESS. What this means, however, is that F23's FACE onset is close to her DRESS vowel, while F4's is not: F4 again, then, seems closer to an advanced young General female speaker than F23.

F23 also shows no sign of a PRICE/MOUTH crossover, again fitting in with General rather than Broad speakers. Since this is what could be expected from a young female 'model C', it merely confirms the theory that on the whole, my (particularly female) speakers are following General WSAE norms.

The onset of GOAT in F23 is further back than F4's (F2: 0.89 vs. F2: 1.243); however, it should be noted that F4's is a clear monophthong, while F23's is not. Again, this suggests a less WSAE-oriented vowel than F4, perhaps another result of the differences in life history and attitudes that seems to give rise to the GOOSE continuum.

### Individual vowel formant values Watt & Fabricius normalized

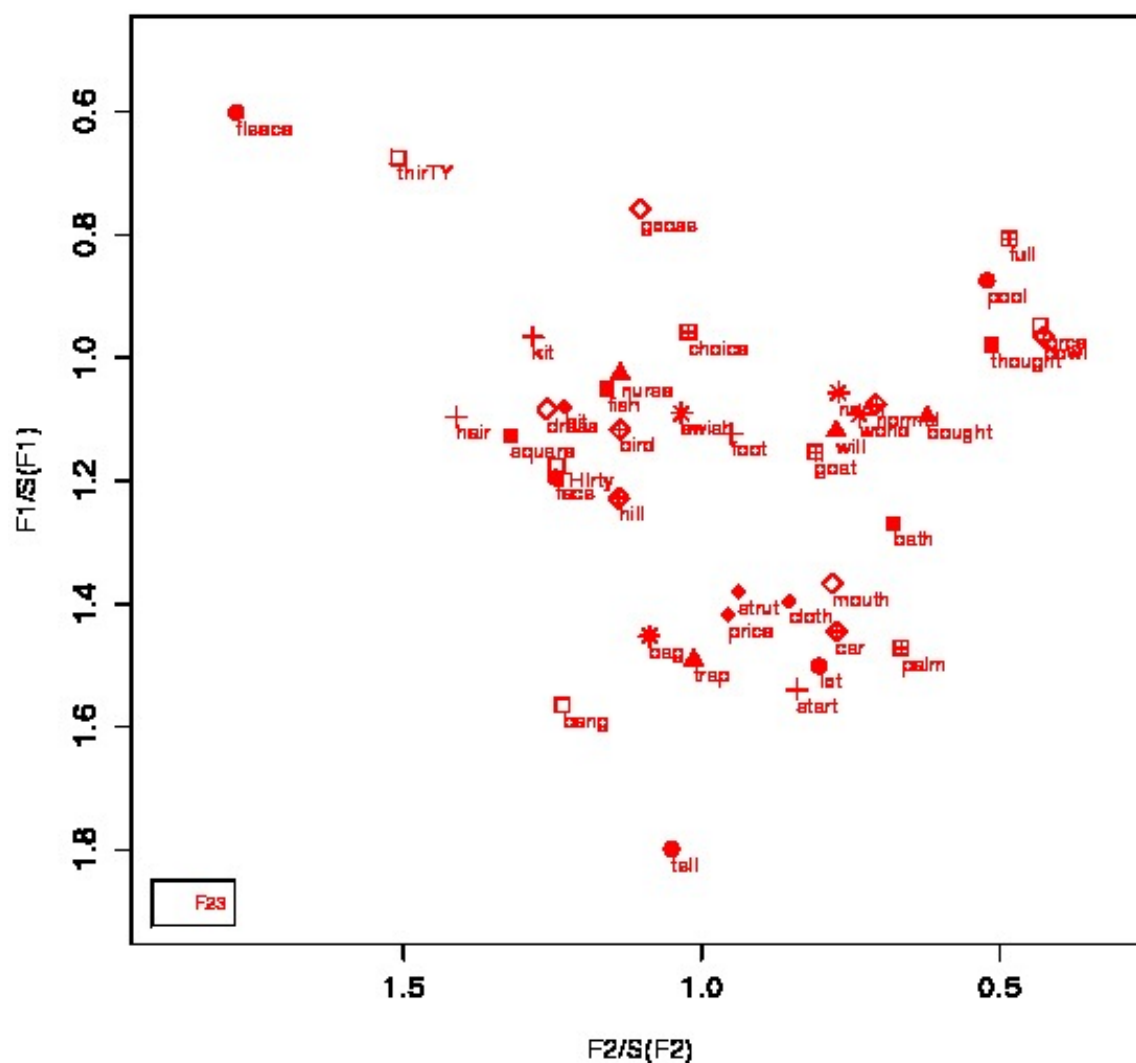


Table 9: F23's vowel chart, with 4 normalised diphthong onsets

If this is so, then we might expect further differences in the diphthongs to show up in M3's word list, which is produced below (Table 10).



### Individual vowel formant values Watt & Fabricius normalized

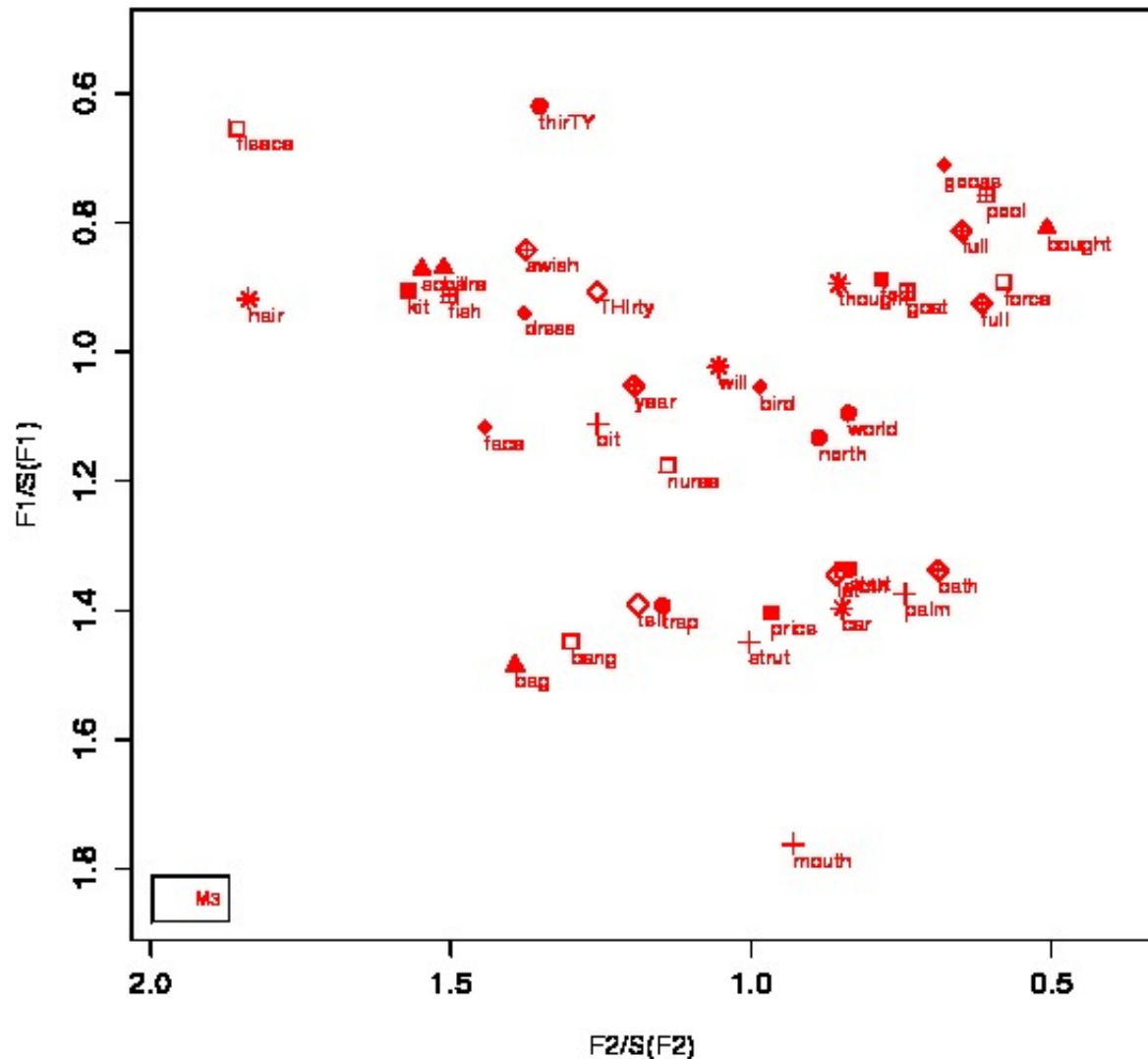


Table 10: M3's vowel chart, with 4 normalised diphthong onsets

As can be seen, M3's chart shows some considerable differences from the above two females'. The most noticeable of these is the contrast between his PRICE and MOUTH. Again, there is no sign of a crossover, but the two are separated mostly by height (F1) rather than frontness. PRICE is very close to STRUT, while MOUTH is very far below this – in fact, it is his lowest vowel by a long way. This possibly suggests an orientation towards a Broad norm, as is suggested as possible in males, above.

His GOAT, near THOUGHT, suggests a BSAE norm rather than General WSAE, although auditorily it sounds rather lower than THOUGHT. However, it is relatively unsurprising for this speaker to appear closest to BSAE among the sample.

FACE is considerably lower than DRESS, which suggests a possibly Broad influence; but it must also be noticed that since his DRESS is particularly raised, this may not be the case. Auditorily, it sounds rather like an RP [ɛɪ].

The diphthongs, then, although they show some expected differences among the speakers, do not provide as clear a pattern as the simple vowels. However, M3's GOAT so close to THOUGHT does suggest some more BSAE influence, like his GOOSE. Also, the fact that his MOUTH and PRICE are so similar in frontness, but so far apart in height, may indicate some link to the PRICE/MOUTH crossover, at least in terms of F2.

#### **4.12 Rhoticity**

As mentioned above, there is some evidence of a (probably American-influenced) postvocalic /r/ among the speakers, although this is less common in formal word-list style than informal conversation. Nonetheless, its presence is in itself interesting, in that it exists at all. We can therefore compare our three example speakers to see if there is any possible relationship between GOOSE-fronting (and model C-ness) to rhoticity.

F4 has only one instance of post-vocalic /r/, in SQUARE, while in other potentially rhotic words she does not: START, NORTH, FORCE, NURSE, WORLD and BIRD. This is difficult to explain, but the lack of a pattern seems to occur among all the speakers who do show some rhoticity: it is not consistent and does not appear to be triggered by particular words, unless this is within an individual speaker. F23 has none, which seems odd considering that she believes she acquired her accent largely from television; but since there are no other apparent Americanisms in her speech either, she cannot have been much influenced by American programs and perhaps watched mostly local shows. M3, too, has no evidence of rhoticity. Perhaps this suggests that the higher up the model C scale one is, the more likely one is to have some rhoticity, but it is a weak claim. Other speakers who use some post-vocalic /r/ are scattered across the spectrum with no discernible pattern. The feature, therefore, even if as

Hartmann and Zerbian (2009) claim, is prominent, seems decidedly unstable; this may be a result of the very beginning of lexical diffusion.

#### **4.13 Summary of WL data**

From the above discussions and examples, it seems clear that on WL-data alone, there is often a pattern of model C-ness which relates to the life histories of the speakers: their age of introduction into the former white schooling system, their relationships with white students, and their attitudes towards whiteness in general. Even the speaker with the backest GOOSE and very back GOAT onset, M3, does not otherwise show much evidence of BSAE variants; he is certainly a speaker of ‘Model C English’, as the majority of his vowel chart shows. Thus although some speakers are less advanced in young General SAE than their white counterparts may be, as shown by Bekker (2009), they are definitely speaking with an accent that is much closer to the WSAE system than anything else.

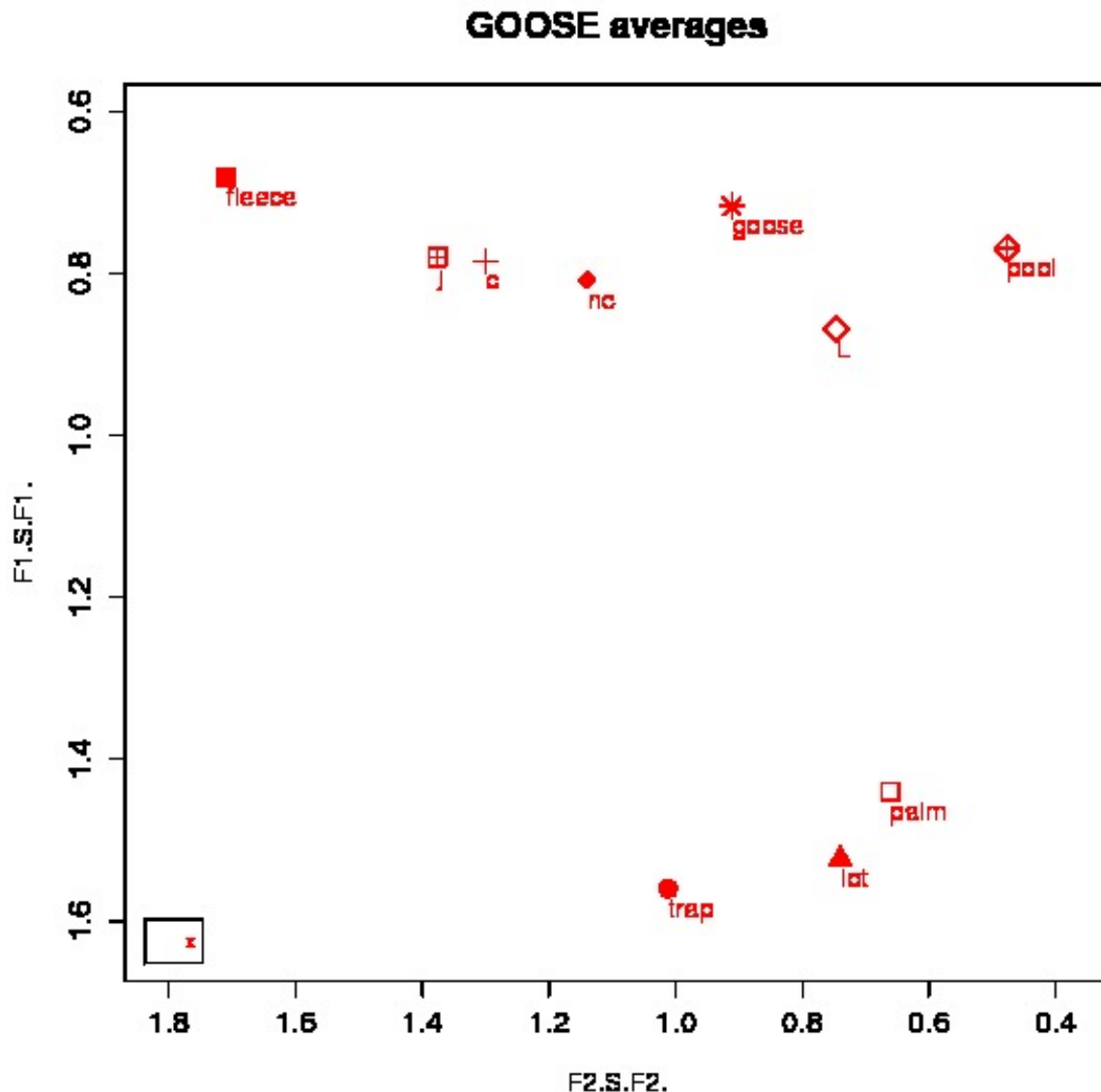
Nevertheless, it is clear that there is no unified (black) ‘Model C accent’; rather the speakers show a rough continuum according to certain factors. However, even this is problematic, because of the exceptions that exist; it is not possible to use any particular biographical or attitudinal factor, or even combination of factors, to actually predict a specific type of variant, let alone an entire vowel system. This is taken up in the following chapter, but it is clear that as a lectal type, ‘Model C English’ has not settled into any specific pattern; rather, individual speakers may be making choices from a fairly wide pool of variants (see Kerswill and Williams, 2000), selected from various WSAE lects, and some BSAE influence; or possibly from other, outside sources such as international media.

#### **4.14 Interview tokens: the GOOSE vowels**

Since from the literature and the WL data, it is clear that the fronting of GOOSE is an important social marker of ‘Model C-ness’, it was decided to analyse the GOOSE vowels as they occurred in interview style more thoroughly. As discussed in 4.4, Mesthrie’s (2010) analysis of a subset of my data found that GOOSE-fronting:

- a) was more pronounced in WL than interview style (using the *goose* token), and
- b) in interview style, was determined by phonetic environment such that vowels preceded by /j/ were the most fronted, followed by vowels preceded by coronal consonants, and finally those preceded by non-coronal consonants (all tokens preceded by /r/ or /l/, or followed by /l/, were excluded).

Following this methodology, then, all relevant GOOSE tokens in interviews were logged and analysed. Although, as with the WL data, there are interesting exceptions to the pattern, the averaged normalised<sup>56</sup> values for these GOOSE-types across speakers were found to occur as below:



**Table 11: average normalised GOOSE vowel values across speakers** (j = vowels preceded by /j/; c = vowels preceded by coronal consonants; nc = vowels preceded by non-coronal consonants; L = vowels followed by /l/)

At first glance, this chart is unsurprising: the speakers, overall, are indeed fronting according to phonetic environment, such that GOOSE vowels preceded by /j/ (marked j in the chart) are

<sup>56</sup> Note that as seen in the above chart, the averaged values of vowels delimiting the vowel space were used for normalisation purposes.

the most fronted, followed hierarchically by those preceded by coronals (c) and non-coronals (nc). Finally, as expected, the vowels followed by /l/ (L) are the furthest back. In general then, the average values reflect the pattern found by Mesthrie (2010).

However, there are other points to be made even from this simple chart, and the first is to be found in comparison of the interview data with the original WL tokens (as seen in the positions marked *goose* and *pool*). In Mesthrie's sample, the *goose* token was found to be slightly front of the non-coronal interview tokens for black speakers. Here, however, it is clear that the WL token (normalised F2 = 0.9, slightly back of central, Mesthrie's 'slight fronting' backish to central quality) is in fact behind the average non-coronal value (normalised F2 = 1.14, 'moderate fronting', central to frontish). In addition, the pre-/l/ category (L) is fronter (and lower) than the WL token *pool*. Thus the speakers, on average, front GOOSE more in interview style than WL style, in contrast to Mesthrie's findings. This indicates, of course, that the larger data sample reveals a different pattern, presumably because my sample includes more speakers of the type with more township contact and/or later exposure to (white) English. What it also means, however, is that Mesthrie's point regarding the WL-interview style comparison, where a fronter WL value indicates that GOOSE fronting has prestige, is not borne out in my data sample. Here instead it seems that the WL tokens may reflect a more conservative pattern, while in interview style speakers in fact front GOOSE more.

A second observation can be made from the average chart, which is that for none of the categories does GOOSE in fact fall into the truly front range (higher than 1.4) – J-words are of course the most front, but the average J-word normalised F2 is only 1.37 – definitely frontish, but not quite fully front. The coronals, too, are frontish, not far behind the J-words at 1.3. Non-coronals are in fact central rather than front, while L-words are backish.

This of course contrasts again with Mesthrie's finding from the smaller data sample, where eight out of twelve of his black speakers have a fully front value for J-words. In this sample, the number of speakers with fully front values for J-words is only 18 out of 44, a much smaller percentage. Breaking this down into male and female speakers, however, reveals a further surprise: in Mesthrie's data, female speakers had slightly (though not significant) fronter vowels than males, especially in the J-words and WL style categories. Here, the opposite is true: the male average normalised F2 for J-words is 1.4468; while for females the

average is further back at 1.355. This difference holds, in fact, for all the interview style categories: for coronal words the male average is 1.3434; for females 1.2877; for non-coronal words the words male average is 1.1625; and the female 1.1339. The differences are small, and probably not statistically significant, but nonetheless it is interesting to contrast this with Mesthrie's findings: the GOOSE fronting phenomenon in my sample of black middle class youth does not appear to be female-led.

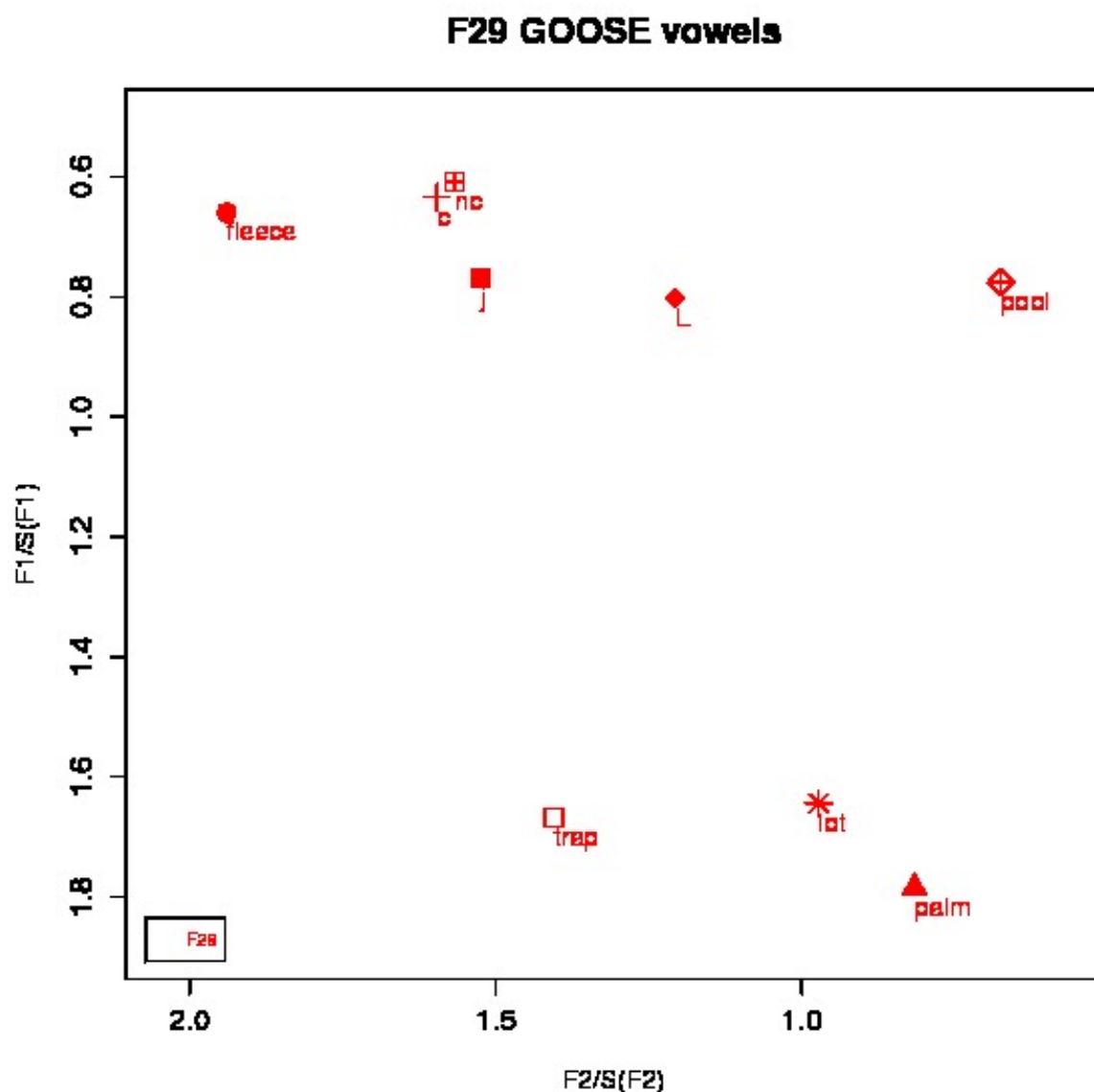
In this, in fact, it resembles the gender pattern Mesthrie (2010) found among his white speakers: for this group, males led females in the fronting pattern, although again it is not statistically significant. However, it is nonetheless interesting to note that my black speakers, in gender distribution, seem to follow the white pattern, if pattern there is, more closely than those in Mesthrie's subset sample.

This is also partly borne out by a simple examination of the number of speakers with fully front values for J-words: among my male speakers, 7 (out of 10, = 70%) have values above 1.4, while for females only 11 (out of 34, = 32%) have these truly front values. This higher proportion of males versus females holds, if less emphatically, across the other two categories, however: for GOOSE vowels preceded by coronal consonants, 4 males (40%) have fully front values; out of the females, 10 (29%) do; for non-coronals, the numbers are 1 male versus 2 females with fully front values.

It is useful, therefore, to look at some of the individuals with fully front J-words, to see what, if anything, they have in common, and to compare them with the *goose* 'fronters' in the WL category. The frontest male average for J-words, at 1.824, is M9. He is also the highest J-word fronter out of the full sample including females; and his J-word average is in fact so fronted as to be almost on top of his WL *fleece* token. In the WL analysis, he emerged as one of the males with a surprisingly front value for *goose* (normalised F2 = 1.255, 'frontish' by Mesthrie's categorisation), which was attributed to the fact that he had been placed in a white private school environment from a very young age, lost contact with his township friends due to the amount of time he had to spend at school, and then moved out of the township altogether. Here he emerges as the strongest fronter of all. Other than for the J-words, his fronting scores in the other two categories still remain high – for coronals, it is still fully front at 1.527, and also for non-coronals at 1.493. Even for his L-word tokens, his value is surprisingly fronted at 0.992, almost central. Thus while the WL data flagged him as

surprisingly fronted for a male speaker, from interview data it is clear that males appear to have a lead – and M9 in particular.

To turn to the females, the highest averages across the categories are found in the speech of F29, with a J-word average of 1.525, coronal average even higher at 1.596, and non-coronal average of 1.567. In fact, as these figures show, unlike in the average chart across speakers, F29 has very little differentiation in terms of fronting between categories, and what there is, is not ordered according to the overall fronting pattern. Even her pre-/l/ average (unlike in her WL) is frontish, at 1.206:



**Table 12: F29's GOOSE interview token averages**

Her WL goose token (not shown here) was also fronted (though not fully front) at 1.217. However, this did not place her in the range of the greatest WL fronter, F4, at 1.529 fully front – F29's 'extreme' fronting only emerged properly in interview style.

F29, it may be remembered from chapter 3, was interviewed together with her (English L1, mostly monolingual) close friend and housemate, F30. F29 herself is not among the earliest English-exposed group, however, or even one who recalls learning English as easy or natural. My notes describe her English acquisition narrative as:

‘went to a "*black school*" in sub-A; couldn't speak any English and so had to repeat sub-A at the white school. Couldn't speak to anyone, except 1 other Xhosa girl there who also couldn't speak English.'

How, then, to explain her presence as the top female fronter, and moreover, the strange similarity of her averages across all categories? There are a few points that might be relevant from her biographical interview data. Firstly, although her exposure to English was relatively late, and remembered as a difficult process, she also commented that she and F30 have conversations at home (they share a house) where she comments, with laughter and in tones of disbelief, on the fact that *'there was a time I couldn't speak English!'*. In addition, her early friendship network, after her difficult start in the white schooling system, quickly became white-based, to the extent that her family commented:

*"At home, I find like, I was the one kid out of like all my sisters and stuff, I was the one that had like white friends. I was, they used to call me a coconut, everywhere like, everywhere. So I had, only white friends, like at the beginning of, in primary school and at the beginning of um, high school. And I was the only person at home, that brought white friends home."*

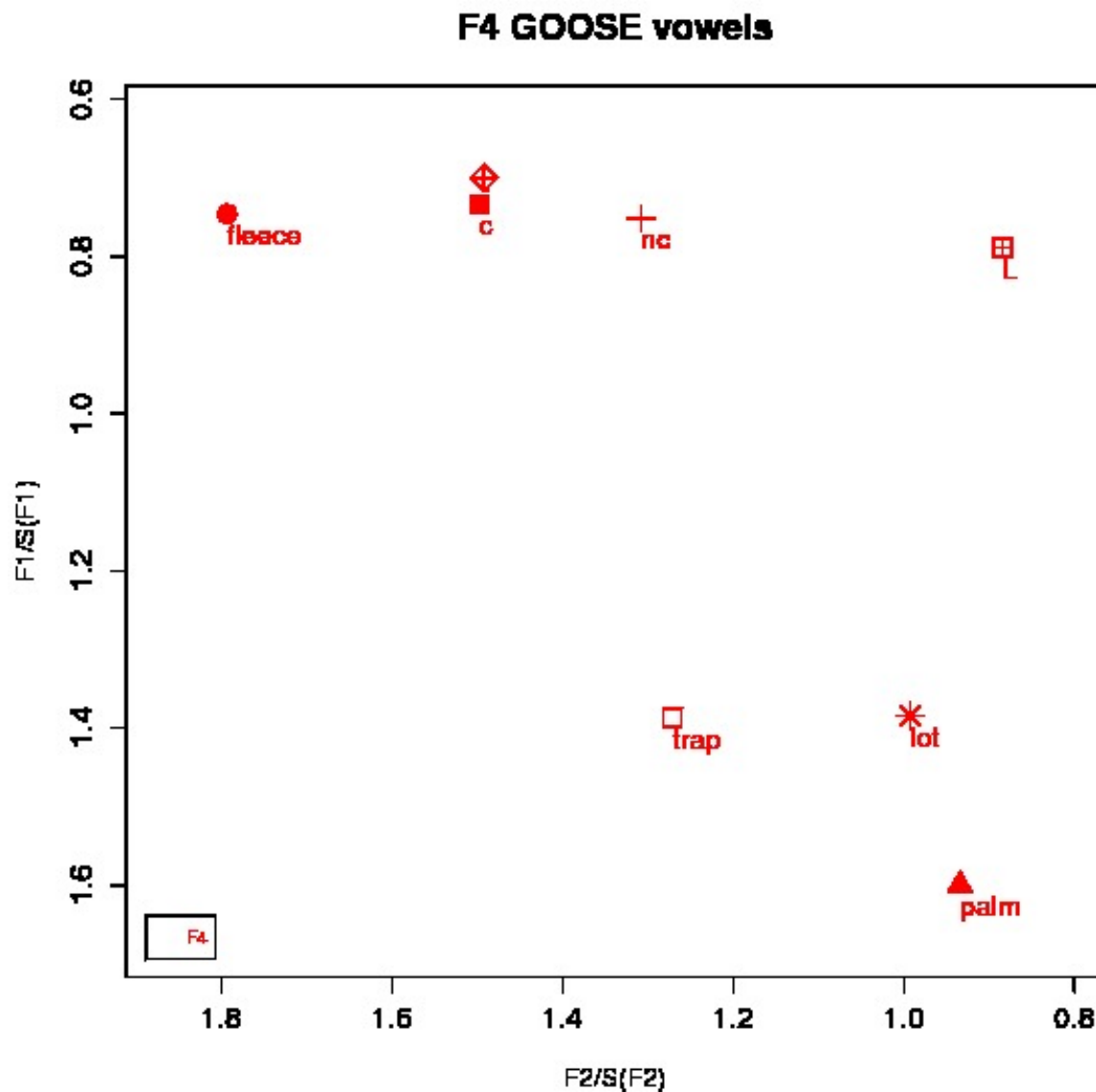
At UCT she now has an entirely black friendship circle, but for whatever reason (she attempts no explanation) her friendships until late high school must have, to some extent, immersed her in 'whiteness' and WSAE more than is common within the sample. With her black friends now, she also speaks English the vast majority of the time; and she collapses into laughter at the mere idea of having a boyfriend who cannot speak English.

Even so, the pattern of distribution of her GOOSE vowels remains unexplained. It seems most plausible that in fact, she is hypercorrecting towards, and overshooting the mark of, fronted GOOSE – as a result of her childhood immersion in WSAE among her friends, from an early but possibly not early enough exposure to WSAE to acquire the fronting pattern.



Additionally, the presence of her L1 English speaking friend F30, with whom she was interviewed and now spends the majority of her time, may also trigger this hypercorrection, as may the presence of a white, monolingual English (though not South African or particularly GOOSE-fronting) interviewer. Whatever the explanation, F29, unlike M9, does not fit the general fronting pattern of distribution according to phonetic environment.

It is also interesting to compare the GOOSE fronting across categories of the three speakers used to represent the tentative continuum of ‘Model C’ accents in WL style (F4 representing the frontest, F23 as an exemplar of the central GOOSE type, and M3 as the speaker with the least fronted *goose* token). These are therefore shown below:



**Table 13: F4’s GOOSE interview token averages**

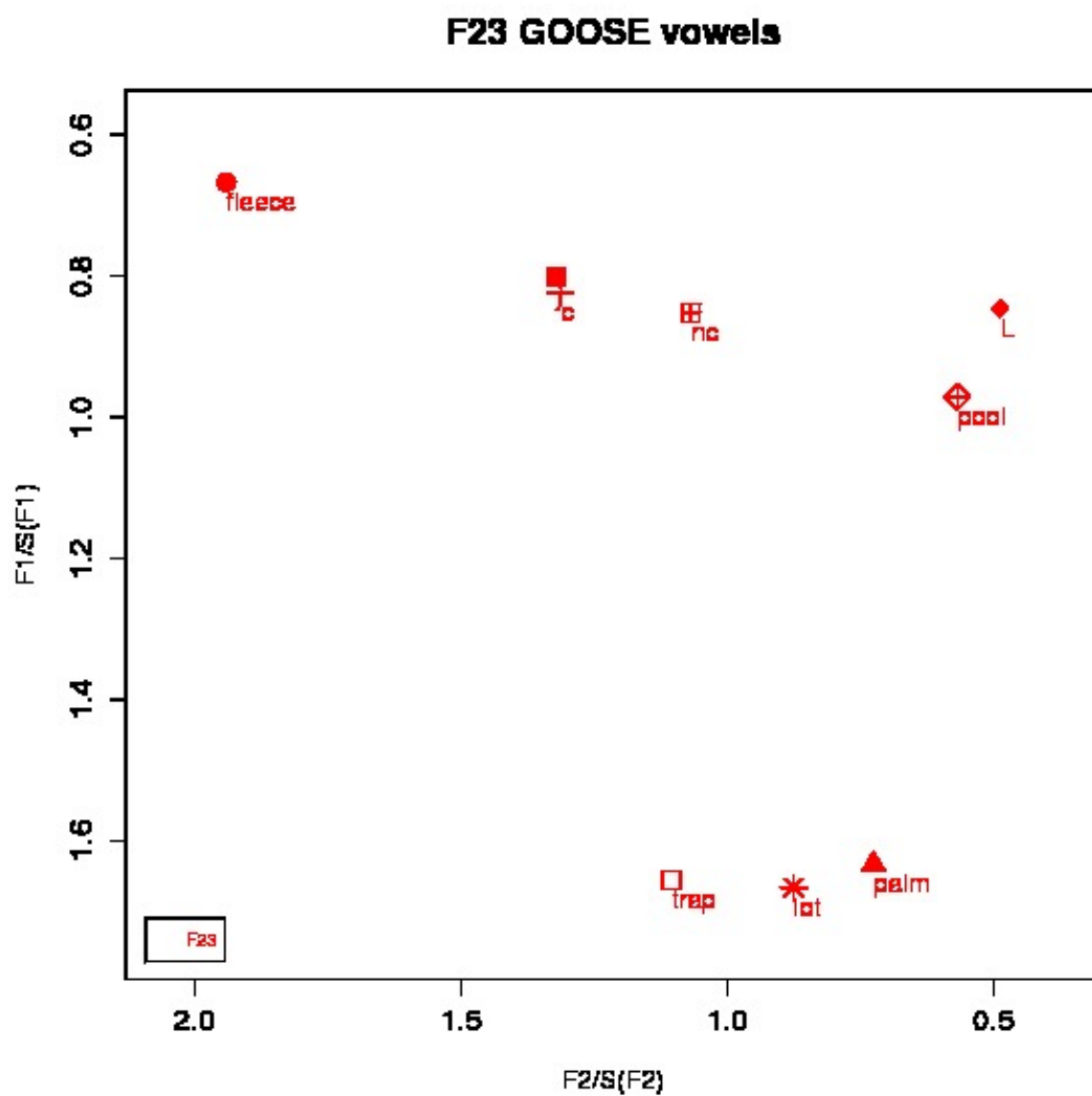
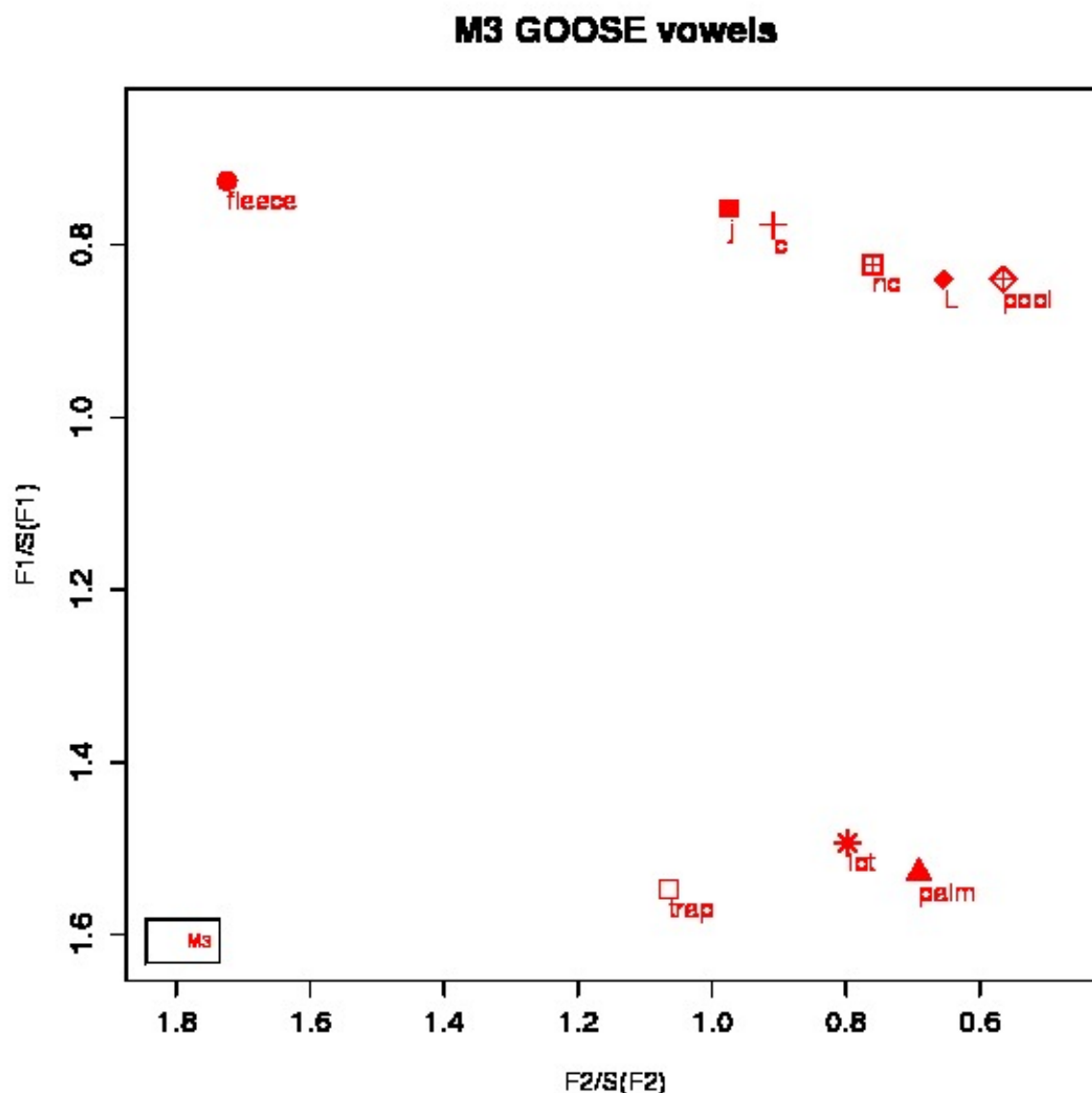


Table 14: F23's GOOSE interview token averages



**Table 15: M3's GOOSE interview token averages**

As can be easily seen from a visual comparison of the GOOSE values of the 3 speakers, the WL pattern of moving from frontest (F4) through to least fronted (M3), with F23 showing values between the two, does remain accurate in the interview style data, although of course distributed across the GOOSE categories according to phonetic environment. In addition, of course, F4 is no longer the 'frontest' speaker or M3 the 'backest', but their relative positions in the frontest versus backest groups across categories are unchanged. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note that F4, in interview style, shows considerable overlap between her J-words and coronal words; another indication, though less extreme than that of F29, that while

the average chart matches Mesthrie's distribution, individual speakers may have quite different distributions across the categories<sup>57</sup>.

#### **4.15 Summary of interview-style GOOSE findings in comparison with WL**

From the above discussion and examples, therefore, several points can be made which, in comparison with both the WL data and Mesthrie's data on a subset of the speakers, show differences and similarities which are worthy of note:

- Firstly, from the WL and from Mesthrie's (2010) results it appeared that, at least as a possibility, if tentatively, females were more likely to front GOOSE than males. In interview data, this no longer holds true: a higher proportion of males than females show considerable fronting, particularly in the frontest 'J-words' category.
- Mesthrie found that fronting was more pronounced in WL than interview style, in his subset of the data. Again, this does not appear to hold in the analysis of the full data set, where fronting of vowels preceded by non-coronals (such as the *goose* token in the WL) is more advanced than WL style.
- From a brief perusal of the three exemplary speakers in terms of GOOSE fronting in the WL, it seems that their pattern of fronting (and associated variants identified in the WL analysis) in relation to their upbringing does remain valid, in that the earlier the exposure to WSAE (in Model C or private schools; and in neighbourhoods), and the more apparently positive their attitudes to these experiences, the further the GOOSE vowels in general.
- From the extreme example of F29, it appears that while early and apparently positive relationships with white schoolmates might influence degree of fronting, this can lead to hypercorrection of fronting in terms of both degree and distribution. It can be supposed that other factors too might lead to such hypercorrection; individual histories of speakers can be revealing of such factors.

Overall, the interview style results, like the WL style results, do show that while there are indications of patterns that can be linked to life experiences, and an overall (average)

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<sup>57</sup> In addition, it should be mentioned that another of the apparently anomalous speakers from the WL data, F8, whose WL GOOSE was surprisingly 'unfronted', retains this relatively unfronted quality in her interview data: J-words normalised F2 = 1.256, coronal = 1.08, non-coronal = 0.791, and pre /l/ (-words) 0.658. However, as this shows, she does have the 'normal' spread of categories along the F2 axis.

pattern according to preceding consonant-type, the patterns are not clear-cut, and there are always exceptions. Thus despite the apparently neat distribution shown in Table 11 (the average chart), a closer examination reveals individual differences which emphasise the non-uniformity of the data.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusions**

### **5. Language maintenance and education revisited**

Although many of the conclusions from this study have been made throughout the thesis, an overall summary of what these conclusions are, and what they suggest, is necessary here. Firstly, it is clear that black parents will continue where possible to send their children to ex-white English-speaking schools, as a result of the history of education and Apartheid in the country. Unless the still almost entirely black township schools improve, this is inevitable. The overall result of this pattern may change, however: as more and more black students enter these schools, it is possible that the ethos of the schools may change from a less ‘white’ orientation to perhaps a new type of school culture, whatever that may be. However, the experiences of some of my speakers who attended ex-model C and private schools which had a majority black student population seem to suggest that unless there are staffing changes, this may not happen. Then again, others such as F8 suggested that as their schools became ‘more black’ there were changes, although as seen in Chapter 3, these were often seen as negative by the students who had been in the schools from the beginning. What will happen in the future is therefore uncertain, but the demand for education in these types of schools can only increase.

The experiences of my speakers in these schools clearly vary based on the particular schools attended, and presumably on their personalities and family background, but it is also fair to say that overall they suggested mostly positive experiences. Whether this is a simple matter of ‘assimilation’ into white, middle-class culture, or whether the students subverted the norms of the schools to construct more hybrid identities, is unclear. Those who insisted on speaking their HLs in the schools, even where this was forbidden, clearly show a stronger attachment to those HLs than those who simply drifted into using more and more English in school and out; but the majority seem to fall into this latter category rather than resisting. Whether this will amount to a full-scale language shift is unclear; as Chapter 3 has shown, many speakers seem somewhat ambivalent about their futures in terms of language use. Nonetheless, it is heartening to see that the majority of them insist that any future children they might have will be brought up bi- or multilingual – although whether or not this will be possible is, of course, uncertain, depending on the future demographic makeup of the schools. Since the speakers clearly indicate that their children will attend the same sort of schools as their parents, it may be that only change in the schools might give them the support needed to maintain an African

HL. In addition, if the parents themselves, as many of them admit, are now more fluent in English than their HLs, it is not easy to see how they will be able to bring their children up as fluent speakers of the languages. However, although de Klerk's (2000) findings among Xhosa-speaking parents predicted that shift to English among the children was inevitable, my findings suggest that this is not necessarily the case for all speakers; and not all parents are willing to relinquish their HLs entirely in the home.

The influence of extended family too suggests some support for the idea that African HLs are preserved in order to maintain contact with these family members. As seen in Chapters 3 and 4, even F4 (one of the most apparently 'advanced' speakers, especially in terms of GOOSE fronting) found as a child that it was necessary to 'relearn' Pedi in order to communicate with family, and seems to have had no trouble doing this. Similarly, F13 suggests that if she is unable to raise her children as fluent Zulu speakers, she will send them to an 'environment' where it is spoken, such as with her grandparents.

Thus it is not possible to predict with any accuracy what will happen in the future, even if the speakers do stick to their professed intentions; but the case for language shift amongst the 'model Cs' is not as clear-cut as has been suggested in many quarters.

### **5.1 Ethnolinguistic identity**

As is also clear from Chapter 3, most speakers retain a strong sense of ethnolinguistic identity, even where they admit that their ability in their HLs is lower than it is in English. But to 'be Xhosa' (or Zulu, or Sotho etc.) remains an important part of their cultural identities. This too seems a positive sign in terms of language maintenance; as long as speakers continue to identify with aspects of a culture, it seems to me more likely that they will try to maintain the linguistic links to that culture. Again, there are wide differences among the speakers in terms of how much contact they actually have with a purely 'ethnic' HL-speaking environment; as suggested, rural and township dwellers appear to use their HLs in the home or neighbourhood more than suburban dwellers – although there are, of course, significant exceptions such as F10.

The issue of language 'ownership' is also strongly tied to ethnolinguistic identity. As discussed, speakers lament their own or others' inability to speak their 'own language'. Despite these comments, they again seem to feel that any future children of theirs must maintain ties to this identity, so that the language and presumably at least some cultural

aspects will remain ‘their own’. Again, how plausible this is is uncertain, but feelings of ownership of a language must surely have a psychological effect on the idea of preserving the language.

Of course, it is not all speakers who feel this way; F30, who is a first language speaker of English despite her parents’ multilingualism, does not seem to identify with any particular ethnolinguistic group, even that of her extended family; rather, she sees herself as simply ‘black’. However, as discussed, she is the only speaker who seems to truly fit the media model of coconut-ness and language shift; for others the HL identity remains part of who they are.

## **5.2 Hybrid identities?**

Since the majority of the speakers report language ‘mixing’ between English and HL, or at least the option that this is possible within their circle of friends, the question raised by McKinney (2007) and Soudien (2007) arises again – does this linguistic code-switching equate with cultural code-switching, as speakers ‘play’ with their own identities? Or have they, to use Mesthrie’s (2010) term, fully ‘crossed over’ into a mostly middle-class identity? This is not easy to determine from my interviews; as mentioned, it is unlikely that a non-English middle class identity or style would be seen as appropriate during an interview with a white English monolingual researcher. I can only state that from what I have seen of such speakers outside of such a formal context, and in my own home<sup>58</sup>, that they are certainly capable of multiple styles and identity positions; whether this is generalisable to other ‘model Cs’ is debatable and requires further research. It should, however, be pointed out for the sake of clarity that it is highly unlikely that this ‘mixing’ of, usually, English and HL, resembles the well-known ‘township’ ‘mixed lects’ such as Tsotsitaal; the few speakers with whom the subject was raised made it clear that their ‘mixtures’ were not of this type. Nonetheless, the actual nature of these ‘mixtures’ is deserving of further research.

## **5.3 Hybrid accents?**

From Chapter 4 (and less so, Chapter 3), it is clear that there is no single monolithic ‘model C accent’; and that speakers disagree among themselves as to what ‘the twang’ refers to. However, this does not necessarily mean that there are no similarities across the group: as

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<sup>58</sup> Here I should explain that for the last 5 or so years I have lived in a multiracial student household in Cape Town.



stated before, although there is a rough continuum between the least and most GOOSE-fronted speakers, all are audibly recognisable as speakers of (a version of) WSAE, though some may have more BSAE influence than others (e.g. M3). Whether any of these accents can be seen as ‘hybrids’ between WSAE and BSAE, however, is less clear; I suggest that there may be a new accent emerging, but while in some speakers it is partially BSAE-influenced, it is far closer to WSAE. This is not the whole picture; there is much variation between speakers, so that it seems they are often making different choices from a pool of possible variants according to personal preference (see Kerswill and Williams, 2000), although GOOSE-fronting does seem to suggest a few other ‘advanced’ General SAE variants.

Thus it seems that although my speakers fall into da Silva’s (2007) lect 1 – the mostly ‘white’ dialect, rather than her lect 2, which appears far more diffuse and BSAE-orientated, the range of their accents may form the emergence of just such a hybrid accent. Additionally, however, both my speakers and da Silva’s draw on at least some rhoticity, though it seems that this may still be spreading slowly via lexical diffusion in my own data set, since no clear pattern emerges, at least from the word-list data. Whether such rhoticity will survive in my own type of speakers seems uncertain; certainly, from several comments, it seems that at least some of them see this ‘*Americanny*’ accent feature as a sign of young black people trying too hard to fit in, while they themselves believe they do not use it.

What this ‘accent’ is, then, seems to be, as above, a continuum of ‘closeness to advanced General WSAE’, which has some correlations with social or biographical features of the speakers. Again, however, there is plenty of variation, and there are exceptions to the apparent pattern: not all suburban students use more English than HL (see, for example, F10), and not all private- or model C-schooled speakers have a fronted GOOSE (see F8). This then seems to be the overall picture: an emerging accent in flux, whose speakers are strongly influenced by WSAE as spoken in their schools, but some less strongly influenced than others. Thus finding correlations is possible, but no single biographical or attitudinal feature is predictive of a certain type of accent, or even a certain vowel variant.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for further research, and limitations of this study**

Because of my focus on the speakers’ word-list data, for the sake of determining what they believe to be the ‘best’ and ‘most correct’ pronunciations of the vowels in certain words, I

provide little information regarding their styles in less formal contexts, with the exception of the analysis of GOOSE in interview style. There is obviously room for a new or further study focusing on informal speech, in order to see what variation emerges in such speech. Thus my interviews, as much as I have used them for ethnographic data, remain rich sources of data on this type of speech. In the future either I or other researchers on Mesthrie's project will therefore investigate the remainder of this data, in order to see how different it is from the speakers' formal pronunciation style. Since the interview-style GOOSE analysis raises interesting questions, it is highly likely that an analysis of other vowels may be revealing.

Additionally, because this has largely been a WL study, focusing on one token per speaker per vowel, a quantitative focus on the different types of variants produced by each individual, as well as across speakers, is necessary to explore the statistical differences in this type of data. Although the evidence thus far suggests that my speakers' accents seem to exist in a continuum rather than form clusters, a study of this kind might use cluster analysis to determine whether, in casual speech, the speakers do in fact fall into natural clusters according to accent type.

I also believe that a long-term study on young (black) children entering ex-white schools for the first time would provide a fascinating study into how their 'model C' accents are acquired, and how they develop over time. I suggest there might be a different development path for children who spoke no English at all on arrival at the schools, and those who had learnt a BSAE-accented version of English before starting school; and that the latter might prove the more interesting in terms of the changes the children's speech would undergo as they acquired their WSAE-influenced accents. A study of this kind would enable researchers to better understand the acquisition process, and the types of variant that are first adopted by the children as they acquire their 'new' accents (or new language) might prove to be interesting in terms of understanding which vowel classes seem to be recognised by the young speakers as the most obvious or 'important' ones to acquire first in terms of fitting in to their new sociolinguistic environment.

Thus there is plenty of room for further research of this type, and into the different types of identities that speakers might call upon in everyday interactions, and how these are signalled by both choice of language use as well as choice of vowel variants. For this type of research some form of participant observation would be necessary, and for this reason a speaker with a similar background to those being studied would be ideal as a researcher.

Further research might be centred on the speakers' social networks: although from my data it is possible to see how these networks might affect some aspects of speakers' accents as well as their attitudes to different 'races' or speech communities, a new study might find correlations between these factors which could be predictive of certain types of variants.

However, because this continuum of accents is still in flux, so that factors predictive of particular variants, rather than simply correlated with them, are probably impossible to find, I chose to base my research largely on qualitative factors; that is, the qualities of vowels in the speakers' English vowel systems, as revealed under word list conditions. While this might seem a limitation of the study, it seemed to me more useful and interesting to examine the range of accents produced by the speakers, and to attempt to find potential reasons for the differences, before focusing on specific variables. Nevertheless, as the GOOSE interview data has shown, such focus may be equally as illuminating. As has been shown, in both WL and (for GOOSE) interview style, although there are no clear-cut links between accents and attitude, it is possible to correlate certain factors, for certain speakers, with tendencies within their vowel system, the existence of exceptions to these apparent links indicates that some speakers at least are making individual choices from the available variants. This is a strong indicator of the fact that no unified 'model C' accent exists, and that even though there is a rough continuum between speakers based on their backgrounds, many of them may be making different choices as to the type of variants selected as their 'best' English.

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